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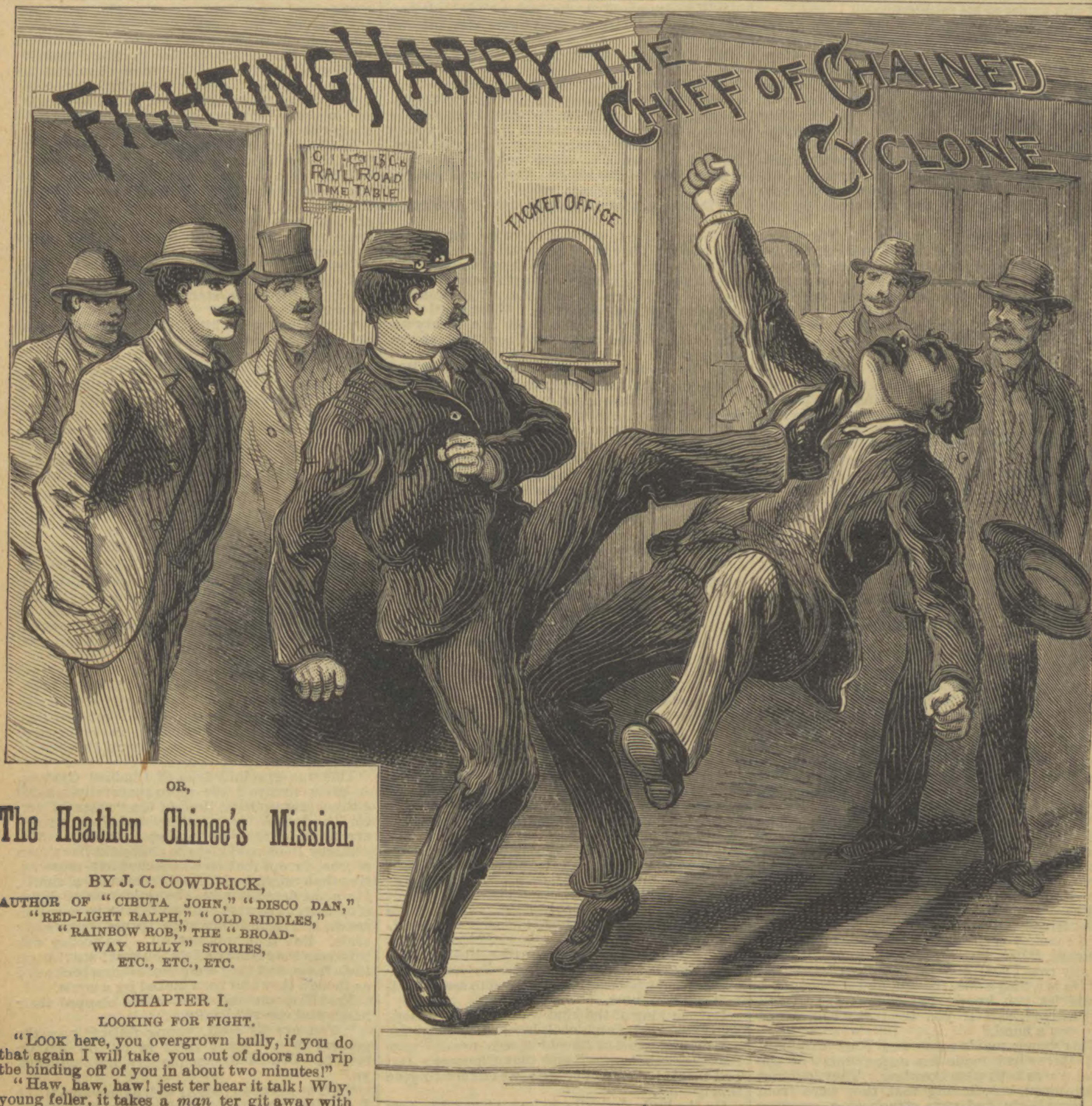
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OR, The Heathen Chinees's Mission.

BY J. C. COWDRICK,
AUTHOR OF "CIBUTA JOHN," "DISCO DAN,"
"RED-LIGHT RALPH," "OLD RIDDLES,"
"RAINBOW ROB," THE "BROAD-
WAY BILLY" STORIES,
ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

LOOKING FOR FIGHT.

"Look here, you overgrown bully, if you do that again I will take you out of doors and rip the binding off of you in about two minutes!"

"Haw, haw, haw! jest ter hear it talk! Why, young feller, it takes a *man* ter git away with Cinnamon Jim, and a mighty man at that. You couldn't begin ter whip one side o' me. Ye

THE YOUNG STATION AGENT SUDDENLY LIFTED HIS LEFT LEG WITH A LIGHTNING-LIKE MOVEMENT, AND THE TOE OF HIS BOOT TOOK THE FELLOW RIGHT UNDER THE CHIN.

dare me ter do it again, do ye? There ye are; an' I kin—"
"Biff!"

The opening scene of our story is laid in a railroad station away out in the wilds of the "woolly" West.

This station was on the outskirts of the town of Chained Cyclone, a town that had the reputation of being the worst on the whole line of the road. It was a branch-road that ran to this place, and the station had been there about a year. During that time no less than six different agents had been appointed to take care of the railroad company's interests, and now the seventh was just entering upon his duties, having been there only a few days.

It seemed the trouble had been that the agents sent there had not had sufficient muscle and "sand" to cope with the toughs of the town, and sooner or later they had come to grief, getting decidedly the worst of every "skrimmage." On one occasion the station had been turned almost inside out by one of the terrors of the "burg"—this same Cinnamon Jim, above mentioned, and the agent had to be carried away on a shutter, it being some days before he was able to travel. One other agent had spent just one day there, returning to headquarters on the next day and tendered his resignation.

The present incumbent was one Harry Dentwood. About a week before the time of which we write he had applied at the headquarters of the company for a position as agent and operator. There was no opening save at Chained Cyclone. The superintendent explained what manner of place Chained Cyclone was; told how the other agents had fared there, and concluded by saying if Dentwood wanted to try it, he might.

Harry remarked that he couldn't well do any worse than some of the others had done, and decided to try it. The agreement was soon made, and the next day saw the new agent on the ground.

For a day or two all went well. There was no disorder of any kind at the station, though there was plenty of it in the town nearly every night; but Harry knew that it would be only a matter of time when he would have to defend his position.

Harry Dentwood was about thirty years of age, and a gentleman. He was educated, having been through college with honor, and his only drawback in life was that he was poor. About the time when he left college his father lost all his property, and the young man had to set about earning a livelihood at once. He had learned telegraphy when a boy, and that became immediately useful to him in his reverse of fortune. He took it up, soon regained more than the proficiency he had lost, and was not long idle. Since then he had moved from place to place, staying a few months at each, having no idea or intention of making railroading his life business, but with the object in view of seeing as much of the country as possible, while, at the same time he kept looking around for anything that might open a good prospect for him. He was of medium size, passably good-looking, and as strong as a Hercules. He had stood at the head in all athletic exercises during his time at college, and it was the confidence he had in his own prowess that had led him to accept the offer of Chained Cyclone Station.

The time was early evening, and the station was lighted up. The last train was due at nine o'clock, and after the arrival of that train the agent's work for the day was done.

As the time grew near, quite a crowd assembled at the station, and some of the persons in the crowd began to grow a little boisterous.

Presently a young man came in and made his way at once into the agent's office.

"Pardon my intrusion, friend Dentwood," he said, "but I thought I would come over and let you know what is going on. Cinnamon Jim, one of the terrors of the town is coming over here to do you up. He thinks the town can take care of this end of the branch without any agent, and he is going to put you out."

Dentwood smiled.

"I thank you for your trouble, Tripman," he returned, "but, I guess I can take care of him. At any rate I shall endeavor to do so."

"He is a tough one, though, and I thought I would let you know what to look for. I will stay around, and if you need any help I will lend you a hand."

This young man's name was Fred Tripman, and Harry had made his acquaintance at the hotel where both were boarding. They had met as strangers, but, finding that they were from the same State, had soon struck up a growing friendship.

Tripman went out of the office as soon as he

had delivered the warning, and in a short time Cinnamon Jim came into the waiting-room.

"Hooroar fer Chained Cyclone!" he yelled, snatching off his hat and swinging it around wildly; "roar! 'roar! Hooroar fer Chained Cyclone an' Cinnamon Jim! They tell me th' railroad company has sent up another agent ter look after things around this burg. Where is he? Trot him out till I have a look at him."

Everybody present moved to give the terror plenty of room, and all eyes were turned toward the office to see what action the new agent would take.

At first Dentwood paid no attention to the blower.

"Where is he?" Cinnamon Jim again demanded. "Trot him out. I want ter see what sort o' critter they have sent us this time. We don't want no agent up here, anyhow, fer we kin look out fer this station ourselves. Th' feller has got ter be able ter do me up, or he don't stay here. You hear what I sing? Come right out, young man, an' don't be at all backwards about it. Trot right out here."

Dentwood now presented his face at the ticket-window, and said:

"My boisterous friend, I must request you to make a little less noise out there, if you please."

"Who are you?" the bully demanded, glaring at the window with the most terrorizing face he could draw.

"I am station-agent here," was the calm reply.

"Oh! ye be, be ye? Well, just run yer ker-kiss out here till I inspect it. I want ye ter understand right on th' jump that I intend ter make all th' noise here that I want ter, young feller, an' nobody is goin' ter stop me. An' funder'n that: I am of th' opine that your stay here will be considerable short. 'Rah fer Cinnamon Jim! which same is me; 'rah, 'rah!'"

"Do you not intend to keep quiet?" Dentwood asked.

"Nary a quiet; an' if you come out here I will wipe th' floor up with ye in less'n no time. We don't want no agent up here, anyhow, an' th' sooner you git out o' town th' better it will be fer your health. We kin run th' machine on this end of th' road ourselves. What is all these lamps a-burnin' fer? One lamp is a plenty fer this room. Guess we'll have ter larn ye ter save oil."

As he spoke, the bully fanned one of the lighted lamps with his hat, and out it went.

This brought the agent out from his office into the waiting-room.

"Look here, you overgrown bully," he exclaimed, in the words with which our story opens, as he strode forward and confronted the fellow, "if you do that again I will take you out of doors and rip the binding off of you in about two minutes!"

Then followed the rough's retort, as recorded, and, as he concluded it, he waved his hat at another of the lamps, and out that went, the same as the first.

But he did not put out any more. Whatever he was going to say was cut right off short, as one of Dentwood's fists flew out and met his face with a spiteful spat, which lifted the loafer right off his feet and sent him sprawling out upon the floor a dozen feet away.

Here was a surprise for everybody, for all had expected to see the new agent cower and put up with the insolence of the town tough without a murmur; or if he did attempt to oppose him, they looked to see him quickly laid out. It was evident that there was more in him than appeared on the surface.

Some of those present ventured to cheer a little, but, there was no time for comment, for the terror was no sooner down than he was up again, and rushed upon the young man like an enraged bull.

"Your coffin is bought an' paid fer, young feller," he howled, as he swung his ponderous arms wildly around, "an' th' date of yer funeral is fixed. You'll find that no dude of a railroad agent is goin' ter run this place. You hit me foul when I wasn't lookin', an' now you'll suffer for it."

Fred Tripman moved forward a little, believing that his aid would soon come in handy for his friend, he certainly expected to see the bully down him, now.

But, nothing of the kind was witnessed. Dentwood stood calm and cool, his arms ready for action, and some of the old sports present saw that he was "game," and that Cinnamon Jim had tackled a customer who was likely to give him trouble.

On the bully dashed, and he sent out his fists with a force that might have killed the agent if the blows had hit him. But they missed.

Dentwood brushed the heavy arms aside with grace and ease, and the very force of the blows struck carried the bully past him.

There was no time lost in what followed. Dentwood reached out and grabbed the man by the collar of the of his coat from behind, snatched him off his feet, and then dragged him speedily to the open door and cast him out like a dead hog.

It was all done so quickly that the spectators could hardly believe their eyes had not deceived them. Could it be possible that this young man had "got away" with the terror of Chained Cyclone? Surely it was more of luck than of anything else.

"Good for you!" cried Tripman; "it looks as though you have come here to stay."

"You're right he has," chimed in the mining veteran; "an' he is jest th' man that ought ter been sent here in th' fu'st place."

"Look out," exclaimed another. "Jim is comin' fer ye again!"

This was true. The brawler had regained his feet, and now he rushed into the room with a gleaming knife in his hand, making straight for the young agent.

There was an instant of dreadful silence, the crowd standing as though turned into stone. It certainly looked bad for the plucky young ticket-seller, but, strange to say, he made no move, either to get out of the way or to defend himself. Was he too startled to offer defense?

"Most all who looked on thought so, but the few who noted the smile that played upon his lips felt that he was prepared. And so he was, but in a way that was quite new and novel to the people of that far-away town."

Waiting until the "chief" was almost upon him, the young station-agent suddenly lifted his left leg with a lightning-like movement, and the toe of his boot took the fellow right under the chin. In an instant he was lifted into the air and sent flying backward, and when he came to the floor he lay as still and motionless as though dead.

Dentwood thought the trouble was now over, but such was not the case. Two other fellows of about the same stamp rushed forward, exclaiming:

"The man what hits Cinnamon Jim hits us, an' you have got ter answer fer this foul play, young feller."

"Come right on," Harry invited, "for the man that hit Cinnamon Jim is quite able and willing to hit you, if you want it. Where will you have it?"

"We'll show ye, in jest one minute," was the cry, as they closed in, and then began one of the liveliest "set-to's" that the town of Chained Cyclone had lately seen.

CHAPTER II.

THEIR CRAVING SATIATED.

SOME of the "old sports" of Chained Cyclone who were present were tickled clear down into their boots at this display of prowess on the part of the new agent. It was clear to them that he had "come to stay," and that this night would most likely settle the disputed question for good and all.

It only remained for the young man to "get away" with Cinnamon Jim's two boasting backers, and he would have the majority of the citizens on his side. In the Wild West the man who proves himself a "chief" is never in need of friends, provided he stands up on the side of right.

This was especially true of Chained Cyclone. A great many of the more peacefully-minded citizens were getting tired of the "reign of terror," and needed only a clear-headed and strong-armed leader to rouse them up to crush it out.

Harry Dentwood met the onslaught like a man of iron, except that he was somewhat more active than might be inferred from such a simile. His arms flew out with the quickness of lightning-bolts as soon as the two fellows were within reach, and their blows were turned harmlessly aside. But that was not all. No sooner was this done than Harry's fists fell spat! spat! upon their faces, and they were sent reeling backward as though they had been kicked by a mule.

Fred Tripman and some others clapped their hands and cheered loudly.

"You are th' stuff, young feller!" was the general cry; "wade right in an' do 'em up brown. You have come ter stay, an' we'll back ye."

"I'll be agent in fact as well as in name while I do stay, you can depend on that," answered Harry. "No set of saloon bums is going to run this station while I am here. Come again, my

cherubs, and let's settle this matter right here and now. This is fun, sure enough, so sail right in!"

The "cherubs" were coming.

As quickly as they could recover their balance they rushed in again, this time evidently determined to crush their opponent at one dash. They parted and threw themselves forward on both sides of him.

But, this plan failed. Harry struck out quickly at one of them with all the force of his arm, and that one went toppling over like a ten-pin. Then he gave his undivided attention to the other. Parrying his vicious blows with ease, he returned them with his open hands, slapping the fellow first on one side of the face and then on the other, until his ears must have tingled like shattered windows.

This was done so easily and gracefully, too, that everybody present had to laugh. The young man had no trouble whatever in warding off the blows aimed at him, and the bully found it impossible to make one stroke effective.

For some seconds this pleasant game lasted, and then the other of the pair, who had meanwhile gathered himself up, jumped into the fray again.

Seeing which, Harry planted a heavy fist upon the nose of the man he was playing with, knocking him out immediately. Then he met the other and continued the sport with him in the same manner.

It was certainly a rare treat for the citizens who were there to witness it.

In the mean time Cinnamon Jim had not stirred, and some began to fear that he was dead. They laid hold upon his feet and dragged him out of doors, where they threw water in his face to bring him to. This soon began to have effect, for, presently, he opened his eyes and looked around. He was bewildered.

"Whar in perdition am I?" was his first demand.

"You hev jest got back from Nowhar, ter which place ye got a free ticket an' through check about five minutes ago," some one answered.

"Yas, but whar am I? an' what be— Oh! great green blazes! now I remember. I was jest givin' it ter that new agent, an' somebody must 'a' hit me from behind. Who was it?" struggling to his feet and staggering around; "who was it? Jest show me th' galoot that done it, an' see me—"

"Th' galoot that done it was th' agent himself," explained one.

"What's that you say?"

"I say that th' feller that done you up so beautifully was the agent himself," the speaker repeated.

Cinnamon Jim looked foolish.

"I don't believe it!" he cried. "Jest let me at him again, an' see how mighty quick I'll make him sick. Whar is th' cur? Jest trot him out fer about ten seconds an' see me trim his hair fer him. Whoop! whar is he?"

"Step right here to th' winder," invited another, "an' you kin see whar he is, an' what he is doin', too."

Catching hold of Cinnamon's arm as he spoke, the man drew him to one of the windows of the waiting-room and bade him look in.

They were just in time to see Harry topple over one of his opponents and begin to play tattoo on the face of the other.

Cinnamon Jim's eyes bulged out like two varicolored billiard balls, and his mouth dropped open as he gazed upon the "circus." Here were two of his very best men—his right-bowers, as it were—being knocked out of time, right and left. And the man who was doing the knocking was the new agent, whose hands looked to be as small, white and soft as the hands of a lady. He could hardly believe the evidence of his own eyes. There went Bullet-head Mike, tumbling over as though the business-end of a cyclone had caught him foul; and Sledge-hammer Gabe was catching it open-handed from left and right.

For a moment the bully chief stood and watched the performance, and then he made a break for the door.

"This foolishness has gone about fur enough," he growled, "an' I'll put a stop to it, you kin bet on that."

The rascal felt for his knife as he was speaking, but, that was lying in the room on the floor, where it had fallen from his hands when he had been kicked over so playfully; so he reached for a revolver instead, and pulled it out of his belt as he entered the door.

Dentwood seemed to have eyes for every part of the room at once, for, no sooner had Cinnamon Jim showed his hand, than Sledge-hammer Gabe was knocked sprawling, and, in the same

instant, seemingly, a pair of revolvers flashed in the agent's hands, and he exclaimed:

"No you don't, Mr. Cinnamon James, not if I know it! I have been on the watch for that move, and here you are! Drop that shooter, or I will drop you, you wolf!"

There was no help for it, and the weapon had to drop, much to the disgust of the tough, who had had things his own way for so long.

The crowd was enjoying the fun immensely, and laughed and shouted itself hoarse. Jeers and gibes were showered upon the defeated ruffians from every side, not a few of them coming from some of their erstwhile cronies, who now desired to curry favor with the town's new "chief."

"How is it now, Jimmie?" some demanded.

"Why don't you put a stop to th' foolishness?" tauntingly inquired another.

"You've come to th' place where th' lane turns," shouted others; and a hundred other tantalizing observations were made.

Bullet-head Mike and Sledge-hammer Gabe were again upon their feet, but they had no idea or intention of rushing forward again in the face of the drawn revolvers. They had had about all they wanted anyhow. The agent, however, was not done with them.

"Step right up here, you two beauties," he invited, "and you will be three of a kind. We will settle this business for once and all while we are about it, and then we shall know who is going to run this station! Step up, I say!"

There was no disregarding the invitation, for the revolvers spoke volumes, so the two craft-fallen terrors stepped out beside their chief.

"Now," said Dentwood, addressing them, first question is: Are you satisfied?"

"No," growled Cinnamon Jim. "I ain't, fer I know that I kin lick ye, an' I mean ter do it, too."

"Very good," responded Harry. "Perhaps you two are laboring under the same delusion," turning to Mike and Gabe.

"We could fetch ye, if we had time enough," answered Gabe.

"Very good again. Now I do not believe in doing things by halves, and while we have business in hand I will give you all the satisfaction you can crave for. Hold up your hands," indicating with one of the revolvers that they were to lose no time in doing it.

The three men obeyed, and then Harry asked for some one to come forward and disarm them.

Willing hands soon performed that easy task.

"It is my intention, gentlemen, to lay aside my own weapons, and to meet all three of these fellows in fair fight, at once. You will please take my weapons and theirs, go out of doors to give us plenty room, and you can look in upon the fracas through the windows. Are you satisfied with this?" turning to the three.

They answered that they were, and the gleam of satisfaction that lighted up their battered faces proved that they were eager for the fray.

"So be it," said Dentwood, handing his weapons over to Tripman; and in a few moments the room was cleared of all except the four most immediately interested.

Dentwood was confident that he could perform all he had undertaken. He had measured his men, and knew that all their fighting ability lay in their brute strength. They knew little or nothing of the science of self-defense. Besides, he had already taken considerable of the "fight" out of them. Their faces looked as though they had been base-ball breaks.

The three stood in a row before their young challenger, who had placed himself near one of the corners of the room, in order to have the vantage thus afforded.

For a moment the parties glared at each other; then Cinnamon Jim demanded:

"Be ye ready ter die, young feller?"

"No," returned Harry, "but I am ready for you, so come right on and let's settle this thing. It is near train-time now."

"Yes, I know it is near train-time," retorted Jim, "an' we will try and have ye laid out, all ready ter be put aboard when it comes. Now, pards, at him!"

The three sprung forward as one man, thinking to bear their opponent to the floor at once, but they met with a disappointment. Harry was not there when they arrived, and they plunged right on into the corner with force enough to have dislocated their necks. The agent had stepped nimbly aside, just far enough to allow them to miss him, and now he had them in a tight place.

Catching hold of Cinnamon Jim by the collar with both hands, he gave him a jerk and threw him clear across the room. Then, just as the others turned, he caught each of them quickly

by the hair and crashed their heads together, rendering them instantly insensible, and they dropped to the floor limp and helpless, then he sprung across the room, and was ready to face Cinnamon Jim when he got upon his feet again.

Jim got up slowly, and as soon as he had made the first pass the agent went for him. Battering him up into a corner, he kept him there, and rained blow after blow upon his face, until the tough howled for mercy.

"Let up," he roared, "let up, let up! I have got all I want; I cave in, I do, mister; you kin stay here jest as long as ye want to."

CHAPTER III.

THE PRETTY STRANGER.

THE crowd outside was cheering wildly.

Dentwood stepped back from the whipped bully, and motioned the people outside to come in—an invitation which was accepted immediately.

"Perfectly satisfied, are you?" the agent then asked, addressing Jim.

"Yes, I've got 'nuff," the fellow blurted, as he mopped the gore from his battered face with his sleeve.

"Your appetite is wholly appeased, is it?"

"Yes; I don't want no more."

"Very good. Gentlemen," turning to the crowd, "this man and his two confederates came in here to-night looking for fight, and I have done my best to give them what they were looking for. You have heard this one say that he is perfectly cured of his longing, and we will take it for granted that he speaks for his partners too. Now, sir," turning to Cinnamon Jim, "you are at liberty to make yourself scarce around here just as soon as you can, and take your partners with you. You may give it out over in the town, too, that I have come here to run this machine, and that I am going to do it. What is more, you need not show your head here again unless you come on business."

With these words the new agent turned and went into his office, seemingly not a bit the worse for wear, and the man who had been holding his weapons now restored them to him. Harry was the lion of the hour. Everybody congratulated him, and predicted that he would have no further trouble. Some, however, warned him quietly to have a wary eye upon Jim, in the future, and to be on the lookout for treachery from him.

As soon as Bullet-head Mike and Sledge-hammer Gabe came to, Cinnamon Jim made them aware of what had taken place, and all three started for their haunt over in the town. Their weapons had been restored, but they felt no inclination to use them—or, if they did, they wisely refrained from letting their inclination get the better of their common sense.

Fred Tripman entered the office and sat down with Dentwood while they awaited the arrival of the train.

"You are a terror with your fists, Dentwood," Tripman complimented. "I had rather be your friend than your enemy."

Harry smiled.

"It was not so much that I am a great fighter," he declared, "but more that the men I whipped are no fighters at all. They know nothing about it, whatever. All the claim they have ever had to prowess has been gained by their loud mouths and their belts full of weapons, with perhaps a fair share of brute strength to carry them through."

"Well, how ever it was, you have certainly done them up brown, and it is not likely they will want any more, in a hurry. At the same time, though, you must be on your guard against them, for no knowing what they may try to do."

"I shall keep an eye upon them, and— But, here comes the train."

Sure enough, the whistle of the train sounded, and the vibrating hum or roar of its approach could be plainly felt and heard.

Harry hurriedly lighted his hand-lantern and went out, closing the office door after him, Tripman going with him.

"I will wait and walk over with you," the latter remarked.

"All right," Harry assented. "I shall be ready as soon as I can attend to business and close up the station after the train has gone."

He went on out upon the platform, and in a moment more the train drew up to the station and stopped. For a time, then, he was busy looking after the baggage, Express goods, etc.

Among the passengers who alighted was a young woman. She appeared to be about twenty years of age, and was really very pretty. She was attired in black, and the sweetly sad ex-

pression of her face went to confirm the impression that she was in mourning.

As soon as she reached the platform she looked timidly around, as though in search of some one whom she had expected would meet her, or else trying to select some one in the crowd to whom she might venture to speak.

There were other passengers, too, but they were all men, and with the exception of one they had alighted on the opposite side of the train and started immediately over toward the center of the town, evidently being quite at home in the place.

The exception was a tall, finely-formed, and good-looking man of perhaps forty years in age. He was flashily appareled, sported a great diamond stud on the polished bosom of his shirt, was topped with a silk hat, and had a heavy mustache that was waxed and twisted to the highest degree of perfection. His appearance, in brief, went to indicate that he was one of the gentry who glide along smoothly through life on their dexterity with the "pasteboards," or, briefly, that he was a gambler.

The young lady had a moderately heavy valise in her hand, and this man, stepping up to her, lifted his hat with Chesterfieldian grace and asked permission to carry it for her.

His polite advance met with a cold and scarcely civil recognition.

"No," was the low and deliberate answer, given without even the formal thank you. "I will carry it myself."

"But, you are going over into the town, are you not?" the man persisted; "and since I am going that way, you will not deprive me of the pleasure it will give me to be of service to a lady, will you?"

"I prefer to carry it myself!" the young woman answered, even more severely than before, and turning away from him, she addressed herself to Fred Tripman, who was standing near the door of the waiting-room, inquiring:

"May I venture to address you, sir, seeking information?"

Tripman lifted his hat and responded:

"It will give me pleasure to give you any information I can, madam."

"Thank you. Can you direct me to a respectable hotel or boarding-house where I will be likely to find lodging such as a lady traveling alone would desire?"

"Well, this town cannot offer you anything very stylish or elaborate," Tripman confessed, "but, I think they can make you safe and passably comfortable over at the Gilded Moonlight."

"What a name!"

Tripman laughed.

"Well, yes, it is rather a peculiar name for a hotel," he admitted; "but then, Chained Cyclone is thoroughly original in its nomenclature."

"I have found that to be one of the peculiar features of the West. Where will I find this hotel?"

The train had now started on, and the crowd was moving off toward the town, going away singly and by twos and threes. The flashily-dressed stranger, however, remained, having strolled away to the end of the platform. It was evidently his intention to wait until the young lady started, and then to walk over near her, if in fact he did not intend to force his company upon her.

"If you follow the crowd," Tripman directed, "you cannot miss it. The town has only one main street, and the hotel is on the right-hand side as you go up. You cannot miss seeing the sign."

"Thank you, sir," the young lady said, and with a bow, she turned and followed the people who were going that way.

"Who was that?" inquired Dentwood, as he came down from the upper part of the platform a moment later.

"I give it up," answered Tripman. "She is young and pretty, and is traveling alone. She inquired for a hotel, and I directed her to the Gilded Moonlight."

"Alone? Then who was the man who spoke to her, and who has now followed her?"

"I don't know any more than you do. He seems to be a stranger to her, and offered to carry her valise, but she refused, right flat."

"Good for her! I did not like his looks overmuch, the little I saw of him. He has the appearance of a card-sharp. Well, wait just a moment, Tripman, and I will be ready to go over with you."

Hurrying into the office, the agent put his books, tickets, money, etc., into the office safe, after which he blew out the lights, locked the doors and joined his friend.

"Are you not afraid some of Cinnamon Jim's

gang will burn the station?" Tripman asked, as they set out for mid-town.

"Let them do so if they want to," was the response; "I am not going to sleep there to guard it. But, I guess they will be careful how they fool around there now."

They were some distance in the rear of the last of the people who had left the station ahead of them, and they stepped out lively, perhaps both a little anxious to overtake the strange young lady before she reached the hotel.

If such was their thought, they made no mention of it to each other.

It was about a full third of a mile to the center of the town where the hotel was. The first part of the way was dotted here and there with houses, then came a little stretch where it was quite lonely, and this was followed immediately by the lighted street of the town proper.

In the middle of the dark and lonely space mentioned was a bridge, crossing a little stream that ran along on the south of the town, and here the road was banked up to quite a height. On each side of this embankment was a protecting rail, to prevent persons and teams from plunging over the highway.

Dentwood and Tripman reached this part of the road before they overtook any of those who had left the station ahead of them. At the bridge they came suddenly upon the strange young lady and the man who had followed her.

"The fellow has stopped her," Tripman exclaimed.

"So I see," returned Dentwood. "Come on and we will learn what is in the wind."

They had taken scarcely a dozen steps when the lady suddenly dropped her valise and ran toward them, as though seeking their protection.

"If you are gentlemen," she appealed, "pray protect me from the attentions of that man, if he is entitled to be called such."

"Has he insulted you?" demanded Dentwood, his blood boiling instantly.

"I cannot say that he has insulted me," was the reply, "but he is forcing his company upon me. He insists upon carrying my valise, after I have told him repeatedly that I prefer to carry it myself."

"We will see that he troubles you no more, madam," Dentwood promised. "I am the railroad agent at this place, and if you will permit me to do so I will carry the valise."

"You may do so, sir, and I shall be glad to have your protection as far as the hotel."

Seeing the turn affairs were taking, the card-sport turned and went on, leaving the young lady in the company of her protectors; and the agent taking up her valise, he and Tripman saw her in safety to the hotel.

They had not learned who she was, but there was an impression left upon each one's mind that she was the most charming young woman they had ever met, and both were already more than half in love with her.

CHAPTER IV.

ANOTHER BATTLE OPENS.

THE Gilded Moonlight was the principal hotel of Chained Cyclone, as perhaps has been mentioned before. It was quite a large house, and pretended to be strictly first-class, a pretension which, comparing it with the other hotels of the town, it fulfilled.

Its proprietor was a thorough Westerner, one Caleb Hartshorne, a man who had once owned and managed a country hotel in the East. He was now past middle age, and had been a citizen of the West for a quarter of a century. Losing his Eastern hotel by fire, with no insurance, he had come to the West, had made his "pile," and had invested it immediately in another public-house. When this house was completed he was at loss for a name for it. The time-honored list of names, such as National, Occidental, etc., had no charms for him, being altogether too tame; and he had vowed that he would not adopt the name of any house in the East that he had ever heard of. What he wanted was something unquestionably original.

At last he got all that he could wish for in that respect. "Gilded Moonlight" was original if it was nothing else. Some one made the remark one day that his new house was "just a Jim dandy; painted up as bright as gilt-edged moonlight." That rather odd comparison gave Caleb an idea. He did not take to "gilt-edge" very strongly, but when he had changed it to "gilded" he did not look any further for a name. In a few days a sign was put up bearing the name selected—"The Gilded Moonlight Hotel."

This by the way.

It was to this hotel that the young lady who

arrived on the evening train was conducted by Harry Dentwood and Fred Tripman.

In a few minutes after her arrival the landlord made his appearance in the ladies' room, having been notified of her presence. He made himself known, and the young lady stated her want. The landlord thereupon assured her that he could give her the very best of accommodations, as his house was strictly first-class, etc.

Having learned the scale of prices, the lady said she would take one of the medium-priced rooms, and giving her name and place of residence, requested to be shown to the room immediately.

A woman came at the landlord's call and conducted her up-stairs, and the landlord returning to the office wrote in the register—"Miss Hope Maunders, of—"—But it is unnecessary to quote more than her name.

When the woman had led the way to the room the young lady was to occupy, the latter requested that a light supper be brought up to her, and proceeded to divest herself of hat, wrap and traveling-dress at once, seeming to be about tired out.

"Well, here I am," she said to herself when the woman had gone out, "and glad I am for the chance to rest. I will think of nothing to-night, but to-morrow I will set out upon the business that has brought me here. My poor, dear sister! I wonder whether I shall find her? I pray that I may."

In a short time the refreshment she had ordered was brought, and, as soon as she had eaten what she wanted of it she threw herself upon the bed and slept.

There was no bar connected with the Gilded Moonlight, which was one of the worthy landlord's boasts, but there was an ample public-room, in one corner of which was the hotel office.

In this room the more respectable citizens of the town generally congregated in the evening to pass away time until their hour of retiring, and the crowd was usually large but well-behaved. The drinking, brawling and fighting portion of the town's population were obliged to seek congenial companionship in the saloons, of which the town had a score or more.

Harry Dentwood and Fred Tripman were seated in this room of the hotel, some time after they had come up from the station, when the flash sport who had arrived in town by the evening train came in from the supper-room.

He was picking his teeth with a gold pick, at the same time displaying a diamond ring that adorned his little finger.

Paying no attention to any one, he sauntered up to the office desk and began to examine the register.

The landlord was behind the desk, but he could offer no objections.

"I thought I would look and see what is the name of that little black-eyed beauty who came up with me on the train," the sport observed, loud enough for all present to hear. "I had quite a flirtation with her on the train, but when we arrived here she gave me the polite shake."

The landlord made no comments.

"There is something that I did not think of," remarked Dentwood, in an undertone to his friend. "We could have learned her name, too, for of course the landlord has recorded it; and also the name under which this self-important card-sharp is sailing."

"So we could," returned Tripman; "and," he supplemented, "so we can."

"And so we will," Harry completed. "I will go up and take a look at the book as soon as he gets out of the way."

It was not necessary for him to do so, however, in order to learn the name of the lady, for the gambler sport announced it aloud.

"Miss Hope Maunders, eh?" he observed aloud in an interrogative tone; "that is rather a pretty name, and quite becomes her. I hope I shall be able to renew my little flirtation with her. Ha, ha, ha! there is a pun for you."

The fellow laughed at his weak attempt at a pun, and Harry Dentwood looked at him with an expression of the utmost disgust.

"Hear the ninny!" he exclaimed in an undertone to Tripman.

"It is sickening," Tripman observed.

"I do not believe the young lady so much as looked at him on the train," Harry declared.

"No, nor I. The way she cut him when he asked to carry her valise was enough to freeze him out."

The sport turned away from the desk and took a seat with the crowd, still laughing at his own attempted wit, and spoke to those nearest him in a condescending manner.

In a minute or two Harry got up and walked over to the desk and took a look at the register. There he learned that the gambler sport had signed himself St. Clair Pembroke. Having satisfied his curiosity, he started to return to his seat, when the sport suddenly turned toward him and demanded:

"Say, young fellow," in an affected tone. "What did you do that for?"

"What did I do what for?" Harry asked, quickly and sharply, evidently not greatly frightened.

"What did you get up and look at that book for, immediately after I had left it? Couldn't you take my word to the lady's name?"

Tripman could see that Harry's blood boiled, but the agent kept perfectly cool under the provocation.

"I ought to answer that it is none of your business why I got up and looked at the book immediately after you had looked at it," he said, "but I will be more obliging and tell you why I did it. I looked out of curiosity, the same as I suppose you did yourself."

"Then you could not take my word that the lady's name was as I read it, eh?"

"The lady's name had nothing to do with the matter. I looked to learn what *your* own handle is."

"Oh, you did, did you?"

"Yes," Harry affirmed. "I *did*!" sharply.

"And what did you want to learn what my name is for? Come, young fellow," rising up from his seat as he spoke, "just explain yourself. If there is anything you want to know about me, I am here in person."

Harry had been on the point of sitting down, but he paused with his hand on the chair. All eyes were upon the pair now, and Harry saw that the fellow was bent on making trouble if he could.

"You insist upon my stating why I was curious to learn your name?" he quietly asked.

"Yes," retorted the gambler, "I do. I consider that you have offered me an insult, and I intend to make you eat it."

This was said in a bantering way, the agent's quiet manner having given the impression that he could be easily bluffed down.

Harry smiled.

"Well," he explained, "since you *insist* upon knowing, I will tell you. I was a little interested to know the name of a fellow so unprincipled and low as to stand up and read aloud a strange young lady's name, adding such false and disparaging remarks. There you have it, straight."

The gambler's face turned white, and he almost choked with rage. Here the tables were turned in an instant, and he discovered that the young man he had set upon had plenty of nerve.

"You say this to me?" the man grated, after a moment of silence.

"Yes," Harry retorted, "and I can say more to you, too. You have jumped upon me with the idea in mind of raising a row, and if you want anything out of me I am here to accommodate you. If you do not like what I have said, you can do the other thing—as, indeed, I prefer to have you do. The ill will of such as you is better for a respectable man than your good will!"

If the gambler could have known what had taken place at the railroad station only a short time previously he would have "gone a little slow," as the phrase goes. As he had heard nothing about that, however, he could not profit by it. If ignorance is bliss, it is, in many instances, a misfortune as well.

"Just what you shall have," the fellow hissed, advancing upon Harry as he uttered the words. "I will cram your words down your throat!"

"Try it," was the calm response.

Having come face to face with Harry, the gambler suddenly let his left fist out with a lightning-like stroke, but the alert agent was just quick enough to brush it aside. The right fist followed instantly, and that grazed Harry's cheek.

This was enough to demonstrate that the man could fight, so Harry sprang back and squared himself to meet him.

"I see you mean business," he observed; "so come on and take what you want of me. This is your own affair, and if you get the worst of it don't blame me."

"If I get the worst of it I am willing to take it," was the retort. "But I fancy it will be the other way. I will show you that it does not pay to interfere with matters that do not concern you."

The fellow had pulled up the sleeves of his coat while speaking, and now he advanced and opened the fight.

The first brush lasted half a minute or more,

and neither one got in a blow. It was a matter of surprise and apprehension to the gambler, and it showed Harry that he had work to do. The latter, however, had many a clever trick in reserve, and felt no doubt as to the outcome of the fray.

After a pause the gambler rushed upon him again, trying to reach his face by several very clever feints, but without success. This was kept up for nearly a minute; then Harry tried one of his best tricks. He made a pass that led the gambler to believe he had a chance for a home blow, and he sent in a powerful one with his right. Harry stooped, let the blow pass over his head, and bringing his open right hand into play he dealt the gambler a slap on the left side of his face that sent him reeling to the further side of the room.

CHAPTER V.

WAH TOM, CHINEE.

It was a clever trick and a successful one. The crowd applauded loudly, and Caleb Harts-horne, the proprietor of the hotel, was in a desperate sweat. If there was any one thing that he hated worse than another, it was to have a fight in his house, but, in this case, he did not see how he could help himself.

A clever trick it could well be counted, and, that was not all. If the young man had struck his opponent under the chin with his fist, instead of merely slapping him as he had done, it would probably have killed him outright. Therefore, it was not only a clever trick, but a prudent and merciful one as well.

There were few present who could appreciate this point, however, though the gambler himself realized it clearly enough.

"Gentlemen," cried the excited proprietor, holding up his hands, "this thing must stop right here! I will not have anything of the kind going on in my house. You must go out o' doors if you want to fight. Do you hear me?"

"The fight was not brought about by me," reminded Dentwood, "and so far as I am concerned it can stop right where it is."

"Not by a good deal it can't!" cried the gambler. "You can't crawl out of a bad fix that way, young fellow. What kind of fighting do you call that, anyhow? What did you hit me foul for? You just hold your horses, landlord, until I square accounts with this young popinjay; it won't take me long to do it."

"I won't allow no fightin' in my house," the landlord protested. "If you are bound to fight you will have to go out o' doors, as I said afore. Now it's either stop right where ye are, or else git right out."

This was said in a very business-like tone, and might have checked an ordinary brawl, but it had little effect upon the gambler.

"My style of fighting is perfectly legitimate," Harry retorted to the gambler's charge of foul play, without allowing the blustering of the landlord to interfere with him in the matter, "and you know it is. You know, too, that if I had lifted you under the chin with my fist instead of merely slapping your face, as I did, it would have gone hard with you. I could have done it just as easily—probably have smashed your jaw or killed you."

"Why didn't you do it, then?"

"I had no desire to maim or kill you."

"Ha, ha, ha! that is about the best thing that I have heard in some time. I suppose I ought to feel very grateful to you that I am alive. Why, young man, I was only playing with you before, but I will show you something now."

"I tell you, gentlemen," persisted the landlord, "that I will allow no fighting in this room. Now please go out o' doors, an' so save trouble."

If Caleb had been a fighter himself he might have gone into the arena and taken a hand in the fray, but he was not much of a pugilist, so he wisely refrained from doing so.

"Come right on," Harry invited, "and show me anything you can. If you get hurt you can't blame me. You may get your beauty spoiled this time."

"Never mind what I may get," was the retort; "you will have enough to do to look out for yourself. You have insulted me here in public, and here in public you have got to settle the account with me. Now, put up and defend yourself."

"Gentlemen!" the landlord cried, "gentlemen! this must *not* be! You will hurt the name of my house! Can't you go off and—"

But, no heed was paid to him. Fighting Harry would willingly have gone out of doors to settle the difficulty, but it was the gambler's affair, and Harry stood only on the defensive.

The landlord was interrupted by the flashy gambler rushing to the attack.

Fighting Harry put up his hands to meet him, and his first blows were brushed easily aside. Then they both went into it, in deadly earnest. It was give and take in rapid succession, and every blow meant business. The gambler was certainly no mean antagonist, and Harry had work to do in keeping him where he wanted him.

This state of the game lasted for fully a minute and a half; then it suddenly came to an end. Harry made one of his pet feints, the fancy gamester fell into the trap, and the next instant saw him spinning away across the room as though he had been fired out of a mortar.

Again the room rung with cheers.

"Rah fer Fightin' Harry!" cried those who had witnessed the affray at the depot, one of whom had given the agent that sobriquet; "rah fer th' Chief o' Chained Cyclone. You picked up th' wrong boy when you picked up our Harry, Mister Man."

"Mebby there was somethin' foul about *that* tumble-over, too," taunted another of the crowd.

"My good friends," cried the nervous landlord, "this must be stopped, and that at once. I cannot allow any such work in my house—really I can't."

"I guess it will soon be over now, Mr. Harts-horne," observed Harry.

"It looks that way," added Fred Tripman.

And so it did. The gambler had brought up against the wall with force, had then dropped to the floor, and now lay there still and motionless.

A few moments passed, and as he showed no signs of life some of the men present stepped over to where he lay to learn how badly he was hurt.

"Is he dead?" gasped the frightened landlord.

"No, he ain't dead," was the assurance, "but th' sense is knocked out o' him slick an' clean. Just pass a little water along this way till we see if we can bring him to an' set him on his pins again."

Some water was quickly provided, which was sprinkled liberally upon the face of the unconscious man, and after a little time he came to and sat up.

He was pale, and looked weak and uncomfortable, while his beauty was somewhat marred by a purple protuberance upon his forehead as big as an egg.

A blow from a New York policeman's club could not have laid him out any more effectually.

"Have you got enough, mister?" asked the man who had been bathing his face to bring him around.

"Give me a little brandy," the defeated gambler requested.

Some one produced a flask and handed it to him, and the man took a strong pull from it, after which he got upon his feet.

"Gentlemen," he said, "this affair is not settled. I have got the worst of it for the present, but it does not end here. The world is not big enough to hold me and any man who treads on my corns. Young man," turning to Harry, "one of us must die, and that right soon."

"So?" interrogated Harry.

"Yes, just so. You will hear from me again."

"Very well, sir, just as you say. I am sorry that this little unpleasantness has happened, but it was none of my doings. You commenced it, as every one present will testify—"

"Yes, that's so," broke in half a dozen voices at once.

"And," Harry went on, "I couldn't do any less than defend myself. I hold no ill-will toward you, sir, but you want to understand that I will not take abuse from any man without kicking, and kicking hard, too. So far as I am concerned, our little difficulty is over, but if you are not satisfied, and go for me again, the chances are you will find me right at home and fully prepared to entertain you."

"It is all very well for you to boast," growled the gambler, "since luck has favored you this time, you young upstart, but the tables will be turned in a day or two. The next time I go for you I will teach you a lesson you won't forget."

As he said this the man was nursing his injured forehead in a way that made his threats seem ridiculous.

"You had better be a little careful how you go for him again," warned one. "If you had been at th' station about an hour ago, or less, you would have seen somethin' that would have opened your eyes. This same Fightin' Harry laid out three of th' terrors of th' town, an' all of them at once, too. You had better go a little slow with him, mister."

"That is all right," the gambler growled,

"but it was only luck that helped him to drop me as he did, and that luck won't be on his side next time. Just take the warning I have given you, young fellow, and be prepared for me. We shall meet again. I guess I will retire, landlord, if you will show me to my room."

"Yes, sir, right away, sir," responded the landlord, gladly, happy to see the trouble so soon ended. "I will show you up immediately."

And he did.

When they had left the room Harry Dentwood observed:

"The superintendent of the railroad warned me that this town was a pretty hard place to anchor in, but I had begun to doubt his word until to-night. It seems that I have been favored with a few days of peace, but now the war seems to have opened in earnest. Well, I will try to hold up my end of the fight if I can."

"And there ain't much doubt about your doin' that, I guess," remarked one of his friends.

A few minutes later the door of the room opened, and a Chinaman came in. He looked around half-timidly for a moment, and then advanced to the office desk.

The landlord had returned and was in his place.

"Well, John," he asked, "what can I do for you to-night?"

"Any new mans come?" the Chinaman inquired, glancing toward the register.

"I see you are on the lookout for trade," said the landlord, laughing.

"Yes," responded the Celestial, "me wantee git alle washee-washee me can."

"Good for you, yaller-skin. You are industrious, if you are nothing else. Yes, I have five or six new names on the book, and no doubt you will be able to get a little work from some of them. One is a sport, who wears fancy biled shirts, and perhaps you can make a bargain with him that will do you good."

"Whatee him name?"

"Let's see, what did he sign himself?— Oh, yes, here it is: St. Clair Pembroke. He is a regular flash sport, toned up in gilt-edge and patent-leather."

"And a bump on his forehead," chimed in some one else.

This created a laugh, and the Chinaman turned around as though to see if it was him they were laughing at. As he did so the light fell upon his face, and Harry Dentwood could not help nudging his friend Tripman and saying:

"The best-looking Chinaman I ever saw in my life!"

"Yes, you are right there," Tripman agreed.

"His name is Wah Tom, and he keeps a laundry down the street."

The Chinaman was truly good-looking. He was clad in the garb peculiar to his people; his complexion was of the usual yellowish-brown tint; his hair was shaved in the approved style, and a carefully-plaited cue was wound up and secured at the back of his shapely head. Thus far in his description he was a Chinaman unmistakable; but when it came to his features the resemblance was checked. His features were clean-cut and regular, and finely molded.

"And then, John," the landlord went on as soon as the laugh had subsided, "we have a young lady here, too."

"Yes?" Wah Tom interrogated; "what she's name?"

"Her name is Miss Hope Maunders."

At the mention of that name the Chinaman gave vent to a smothered cry, his yellow face turned a shade lighter, and he grasped the edge of the desk for support.

CHAPTER VI.

CINNAMON JIM'S RAID.

THE eyes of all present were turned upon the Chinaman in surprise. What knew he of Miss Hope Maunders, that the mention of her name should have such an effect upon him? Was it that? or was he suddenly ill?

"What's th' matter now, John? What has hit ye wrong?" asked Caleb Hartshorne, the landlord, quickly.

Wah Tom did the best he could to recover himself, and answered:

"N-nothin'; me all light now. Sometimes me git kink under ribs; take all wind out quick. Me all light now."

The explanation was plausible enough, and there being no reason why any one should doubt his word, that explanation was accepted.

"I thought it must be somethin' of that kind," Caleb commented, "th' way it took holt o' ye. Well, if any one asks for a washee, John, I will

send him to you. You are about th' first strictly honest John that I ever fell in with."

"Most all Chinamen in the 'land of sundown' are called John, altogether regardless of what their names happen to be."

Wah Tom grinned, and responded:

"Yes, me honest John; me do good washee-washee; do him cheap, too. Well, now me say good-nightee, then go home."

So saying, he turned to go, but Harry Dentwood stopped him.

"By the way, John," he said, "I have some duds to be washed; will you come up and get them to-morrow morning? I will do them up and leave them here with the landlord."

"Yes, sir, sure pop every time," was the reply, with another grin, and then the young Chinese turned and went out.

"Yes, sir," declared Fighting Harry again, turning back to his friend Tripman, "that is the best-looking Chinaman I ever set eyes on."

"My opinion of him," expressed Fred, "is that he isn't full-blood Chinese."

"Just what I was going to remark myself, but the color of his skin and the length of his cue give the lie to that. I guess he is Chinese fast enough, but I dare wager that they don't produce many like him in the land of flowers."

"No, I should say not."

The Chinaman had been gone but a very few minutes when the door opened again, and who should enter but Cinnamon Jim and Sledge-hammer Gabe, closely followed by three others of their ilk.

Fighting Harry "tumbled" to their intention immediately. It was clear to him that they were there with the intention of squaring accounts with him. Jim and Gabe were about half charged with fire-water, and the others had enough aboard to make them ugly and reckless.

It looked as though Cinnamon Jim had repented of saying that he acknowledged the superiority of the new railroad agent and that he could stay at Chained Cyclone as long as he wanted to, and had now come, well backed, to dispute the right with him once more.

"Here's trouble, as sure as you are born," said Harry to Tripman, in an undertone, as soon as the men had filed in.

"That is what there is," agreed Fred, "and you have got to use your spurs this time if you ever did."

"Well, I shall do the best I can if they tackle me. Let's see what their intentions are."

Caleb Hartshorne was trembling in his boots. He quickly surmised what was in the wind, and already visions of tumult and disorder were floating before his mind's eye, to say nothing about broken glass and smashed-up furniture, with perchance a dead man or two lying around in the way. Enough has been said to show that the worthy landlord had a horror of trouble of this kind in his house, and he was in a very unhappy frame of mind at the present prospect.

"Heur we be," cried Cinnamon Jim, "th' chief priests o' Chained Cyclone, an' don't ye fergit it. If anything has been said to our discredit ter-night, we are here ter redeem ourselves, an' don't ye fergit that nuther. Whoop-ee! Where is that feller that has come here ter run th' railroad business an' th' town business too? Have you seen anything of him, landlord?"

"My good gentlemen," implored Caleb, "pray don't let us have any disorderly conduct here; pray don't."

"That is all right, landlord," pacified Jim, "there won't be much trouble, fer it will be all over so soon there won't be any time fer trouble. Where is th' feller w'ot thinks he is th' king bee o'— Oh! there ye be, be ye, younker?" the fellow now seeing Harry for the first time.

"Do you mean me?" Harry asked, quietly.

"Do I mean you? Wal, I reckon I do. I have made up my mind that I kin lick you, my pippin, an' I'm goin' ter do it. It is as plain as day that you had luck on your side over there at th' station, fer it don't stand ter reason that sich a feller as you could git away with three o' th' best men of this burg unless you had."

"So you want me to tackle five of you this time, eh? That does not speak well for your idea of the fairness of things, that I must say."

So remarked Harry as he rose from the chair.

"Nothin' of th' kind!" retorted Cinnamon, hotly. "These have come along ter see th' fun, an' nothin' else."

"Where is the other one that I laid out over at the station?" Harry asked. "I should think you would have brought him along to see the fun, too."

"Perhaps he has concluded that he had enough fun for one night," suggested Tripman.

"You had better keep your mouth out of this

argymint," warned Sledge-hammer Gabe, as he moved forward with a threatening attitude toward where Fred stood.

"And you had better be satisfied with what you have had already," retorted Fred, fearlessly. "You will find that you will have all the fun you want if you tackle this crowd."

"Gentlemen, good gentlemen," pleaded the landlord, "please don't have any trouble here. Remember there is wimmin in th' house, an'—"

"You shut your head!" ordered Cinnamon Jim. "An' you, young feller," he added, advancing upon Dentwood, "you come here."

As he said this he reached out his hand as though he would take hold of the young man's collar and jerk him to him with a suddenness that would whip the boots off his feet. But it didn't work that way. The outstretched arm received a blow that made its owner spin right around face the other way, and then Fighting Harry planted his foot upon the rear portion of the bully's person with a force that lifted him clear off the floor and sent him sprawling upon his hands and knees some distance away.

Such a bowl of laughter as went up then can be better imagined than described.

"What're ye doin' down there?" some demanded.

"That's a purty attertude fer a chief priest," taunted another.

"Git up an' come again," invited others.

"You've made up your mind that you kin whip Fightin' Harry," cried others; "now is yer chance. Up an' at him."

"What did I tell you?" demanded Tripman, turning to Sledge-hammer Gabe; "you will have all the fun you want, I guess."

"Mebby you are hungerin' fer some of th' same sort," growled Gabe, as he bent his blood-shot eyes upon the young man.

"Some of the same sort Cinnamon Jim has just received?" interrogated Fred; "no, I thank you, not any in mine."

By this time Cinnamon had gathered himself up, and he was so enraged that he fairly foamed at the mouth.

"What sort o' fightin' do ye call that?" he demanded. "That is some more o' yer foul tricks. Wasn't that foul, boys? I leave it ter th' crowd."

"Yes! Yes! Foul play! That's what it was!" So cried the bully's friends, and so loudly and so persistently that scarcely any other voices could be heard.

"What is your idea of fair play, then?" asked Harry, as soon as he could be heard.

"What is my idee o' fair play, eh? My idee o' fair play is ter stand right up, man ter man, an' settle th' thing in a fair way. That's what my idee o' fair play is, younker."

"It is, eh? Well, if that is the case, you ought to be satisfied, for that is the way we settled the thing over at the station, if I remember rightly."

"Yes, but that didn't settle it fer good. I didn't git no fair show that time, but I will this time, you kin gamble on that. Now, square yerself."

"My friends, my dear, good friends," urged the landlord, now in a perfect fever, "please don't fight here. This is no place to fight, and think of the damage you will do to my house. Now, please—"

"Now please shut up your big head," completed Cinnamon, "an' there won't be as much of a time as you are afeerd of. Be ye ready, younker?"

"There won't be much of a time if you git sarved th' same as ye did afore," chimed in some one.

Here was another round of laughter.

"Yes, I am ready," responded Harry, "and I shall try to give you such perfect satisfaction this time that you will not want any more. You acknowledged over at the station that your appetite was wholly appeased—that you did not want any more, but here you are again as crazy as ever. I will cure your longing this time if I can do it. I promise you that."

With these remarks Harry "squared" himself as the bully had invited him to do, and announced that he was perfectly ready.

In the mean time peace had in no wise been declared between Tripman and Gabe, and there was more trouble brewing in that quarter. Fred's last retort had increased Sledge-hammer's rage, and he was about as ready to pitch into Fred as Cinnamon was anxious to go for Harry.

"I'll give you some of another sort, an' that right quick," retorted Gabe to Fred's last remark. "if you say two words more."

"Wade right in," Fred invited, "for five of you are 'most too many for my friend, I imagine, and I may as well let you take satisfaction

out of me. It is a wonder you couldn't find a few more to help you."

Tripman's fighting ability was only ordinary, but he had pluck.

"What d'ye mean by that?" Gabe demanded.

"Just what I say," was the retort.

"Wal, you'll find that I don't need no help ter git away with you, an' that right soon, too."

With this Sledge-hammer advanced upon him with his hands up for action.

Such a plan had evidently been concocted, to raise a general disturbance if possible, in the midst of which they would try their best to do harm to the new agent.

Sledge-hammer Gabe threw himself upon Tripman about the same time when Harry and Cinnamon Jim went into action, and in a very few moments there was a general melee in the room, in which Cinnamon's other three backers lost no time in taking an active part, and for the time being Fighting Harry had his hands about full.

CHAPTER VII.

A CYCLONE LET LOOSE.

How shall we begin to describe such a fight? If Chained Cyclone was an appropriate name for the town, and we have not paused to inquire why the town was so called; this fight was worthy to be called a cyclone let loose.

It was certainly the liveliest "scrimmage" the Gilded Moonlight had ever witnessed.

As soon as Fighting Harry had announced that he was ready for the fray, the big bully began to spar at him in a very business-like manner, but at the same time keeping so far away that Harry could not have reached him if he had wanted to; which he did not at present.

"When you come close enough," Harry remarked, "we will get down to business. I do not mean to chase you all around the room. You act as though you are afraid. That cannot be the case, however, surely."

"Afraid o' you? nary. I'll be there in a minnit."

The landlord here tried to offer further protest, but there was no time for that now. Cinnamon saw that he could not back out now nor delay action, so he sprang in with a desperation born of despair. Whatever rum-bred courage he had had when he came in had now petered out, since his tumble to the floor from the toe of the young man's boot, and he was somewhat cooled off.

In he sprang, delivering a crushing blow as he came, but one that was rendered impotent by the cool manner in which it was met. Fighting Harry brushed it easily aside, and then out went his right like a thunderbolt, taking the man squarely in the breast. It was one of Harry's strongest blows, and the result was what might be expected. The man was raised right off his feet and carried head first toward the opposite wall. But he did not quite reach there. There was a table in the way, and he fell upon that with a crushing force. The table creaked and swayed under the sudden shock, and then it gave way and Cinnamon Jim went down in the wreck.

All this was the work of about five seconds' duration.

As the table went down a groan of despair went up from the landlord, and he once more essayed to interfere, but there was no time given him to do so. A fight between Sledge-hammer Gabe and Tripman was already in progress, and no sooner was Cinnamon knocked out than his three confederates rushed upon Fighting Harry as one man.

For the time being, then, to repeat ourselves, Harry had his hands about as full as he wanted them.

As the three came for him he took a full breath, and prepared to meet them. It was, to a certain degree, the scene at the station repeated. The middle man of the trio was sent sprawling over to where Cinnamon was just trying to get up, and the pair collided with force enough to have killed them both. And no sooner was that blow sent in than Harry made a grab for the other two with the intention of dashing their heads together. But he missed getting them.

Having slipped up on that trick, the young man sprang back a step to avoid them, and instantly put up his hands in a position for defense.

About this time Tripman was getting the worst of his part in the fray. His burly opponent had succeeded in getting in a telling blow on his breast, for the moment staggering him, and was now pushing him hard.

The quick eyes of Fighting Harry seemed to take in everything at a glance, and he saw

that his friend needed a little help. Fred was backing toward him, warding off the blows which Gabe was raining at him, and when he came near enough Harry lent a hand.

Just the moment previously Harry had knocked over one of his two antagonists, and had pushed the other back, so he had an instant to spare, and Tripman got the benefit of it. The moment he and Gabe came near, Harry's foot flew up between them, and Gabe got a shock that nearly paralyzed him. The toe of the young man's boot took him under the chin, almost lifting his head from his shoulders.

Tripman quickly availed himself of this advantage, and turning from defensive to offensive, he planted a blow upon his opponent's neck with his right, following it instantly with another on his nose with his left, and following that up with another with his right, that sent Gabe into a corner in a heap.

The crowd cheered wildly, and the landlord was almost crazy. If this was kept up long, he foresaw, the whole room would be a wreck.

"Friends and citizens," he bellowed, "this must be stopped. I order you to stop, and that at once!" And to give emphasis to the order, his hands came up from under the desk with a big revolver in each.

No attention was paid to him now, however. If he had taken this step before the fight had commenced, he might have held the winning hand; but it was now too late in the day for that. He was armed, but he could not shoot without the danger of hitting the very ones he would not want to hit, so he might as well have been unarmed.

Barely had Fighting Harry lent his timely assistance to Tripman, when he had his own hands about as full as he could wish to have them. Cinnamon Jim and his three allies dashed themselves upon him all together, intending to crush him down, and in all probability kill him, if they could do it without the use of weapons. But they again met with disappointment. Harry met them with the fury of a tiger, and his fists flew out with lightning-like rapidity, flooring Cinnamon and one of the others in almost no time.

By this time Sledge-hammer Gabe was again upon his feet, a sorry-looking object indeed, but more enraged than ever. He saw Cinnamon and the other man toppled over, and saw that the other two were likely soon to follow him. And he saw, too, his late antagonist rush in and lend his assistance to Fighting Harry.

Waiting only long enough to see the way the fight was going, Gabe dashed into the melee once more, making straight for Harry.

The witnesses were shouting themselves hoarse, urging Harry to do them toughs all up, as they expressed it, and two or three of them were edging around as though ready to lend their aid if it should be needed. As for Caleb Hartshorne, he was by this time in a literal sweat, and handled his revolvers nervously.

Sledge-hammer Gabe had no sooner got into the arena again than the iron-like fist of Fighting Harry fell upon his nose with crushing force, and he was knocked heels over head and deposited upon the wrecked table where Cinnamon had recently reposed.

It was now about as hot a fight as it could be made without the use of weapons, and they were the next thing in order.

No sooner had Harry done for Sledge-hammer than he laid hold of two of the others and dashed them together with force, a trick he had been waiting some time to accomplish; and one of them was rendered instantly insensible, while the other staggered around something after the manner of a rooster with its head off, about as completely dazed.

Now it was getting interesting.

"Walk up, Cinnamon, an' take yer rations," some would call out; while others demanded to know what was the matter with the chief priests of the town now. "Where be ye?" they yelled; "ye don't seem ter be as chipper as ye was."

One of the "bad men" of the town was laid out and rendered harmless for the time being; another was knocked silly, and evidently had enough; but there was still three of the fellows left to carry on the fight.

Fighting Harry's work was not by any means done yet, but he now held the best hand so long as they stuck to nature's weapons.

"I can take care of them now," he said to Tripman, as he once more toppled over Cinnamon Jim, and the next instant sent the fifth man flying after him; "you sit down and see the fun."

No sooner were these words out of his mouth, than Sledge-hammer Gabe presented himself for another dose, his face and beard all smeared and

matted with blood, and his nose all out of shape and proportion.

Harry was there to receive him with open arms, so to say, and he got a warm welcome. A few stinging blows were planted upon his breast, and then presently he got a heavy one under the ear and dropped to the floor as senseless as the other subject.

If it had been hot and interesting before, it was now red-hot and still heating, as the phrase goes. It was doubtful whether the town had ever seen a bigger "time" than this.

But it was destined to be much livelier than this, for the climax had not yet been attained. It was coming, however.

When Cinnamon Jim got upon his "pins" this time, he had a knife in hand. The lesson he had received oyer at the station had evidently slipped away from him, or else he was now fighting crazy. Most likely the latter was the case.

"Curses on ye!" he grated, "we'll fix ye now. Come on, pard!" in a louder tone, "an' we'll do 'em up!"

At this the door was flung open, and half a score more of desperate characters swarmed into the room.

Now there would be "music in the air" beyond a doubt.

Caleb Hartshorne was perfectly beside himself. His eyes were bulging out, his breath came short and hard, the perspiration rolled down his face, and he was waving his revolvers above his head wildly.

"Order!" he shouted; "order, gentlemen! good gentlemen, order! This is no place for such work. Order! I say; order! If you do not stop this heur business, I'll fire. Order!"

Just then one of his revolvers went off, planting a bullet in the ceiling; and not realizing that it was his own weapon he had heard, the worthy Caleb dropped down behind his desk with amazing quickness, bellowing louder than ever for the tumult to cease.

No attention could be paid to the landlord now, though, for there were other matters of far more importance on hand. This was the case with Fighting Harry especially. The young agent plainly saw that he was in a hard crowd, and that it would be necessary for him to resort to desperate means without delay.

"Come!" he cried to Tripman, the instant he realized what was up, and with a bound he was on the opposite side of the room, where in almost no time he overturned a table and wrenched the legs off as though they had been merely stuck on with glue. One of these he handed to Tripman, and grasping another for himself, he sprang into the crowd, dealing blows right and left.

The town of Chained Cyclone had never seen anything like it.

Harry's blows were rained thick and fast upon the heads of the fellows who were after his life, while Tripman and three or four others were lending him all the assistance they could. Now and then the crack of a revolver added to the uproar and excitement, and likewise to the terror of the landlord, who did not show his head but bellowed louder than ever for peace.

This state of affairs lasted about two minutes, and then it came to an abrupt end. Those of the attacking party who were in condition to retreat, did so with suddenness and dispatch, leaving their fallen comrades upon the field. And they were not a few.

It was a victory complete for Fighting Harry and those who had lent him their timely aid. Cinnamon Jim, Sledge-hammer Gabe, and the three who had come in with them, were laid out insensible, and four of the later arrivals were numbered with them. The residue were conspicuous for their absence. As for Harry and the others, they had sustained very little damage in the encounter, and were elated accordingly. Harry himself had not received a scratch; Tripman had an ugly cut in one sleeve, but the knife had merely drawn blood and no more; and only one or two of the others had wounds to display. But the invaders—well, they were a sad and sorry sight.

CHAPTER VIII.

CROWNING THE VICTOR.

In one respect the excitement was over, and yet in another respect it knew no bounds. The fight was over, and the enemy were laid low, except those who had taken to their heels and made good their escape, and the excitement that now prevailed was more in the nature of a jubilee to celebrate the victory.

"Is it all over?" inquired Caleb Hartshorne, as he peered with one eye around from behind the desk where he had taken refuge.

"Yes, it is all over," was the response, "and you kin come out. There won't be no more trouble here ter-night, you kin gamble on that."

Thus reassured, Caleb came out and looked around over the blood-stained field of action.

There were nine of the invaders, all laid out as though dead, and it was not unlikely that some of them were dead. Some were lying on their faces, others upon their backs, others were doubled up like jack-knives, and all were thoroughly and completely "done up." Their hair and beards were matted with blood; the eyes of most all of them were swelled shut; some had their noses mashed all out of shape; and it would have been a hard matter to have decided which of the lot looked worst.

The landlord looked around for a moment in silence, and then he ejaculated:

"Peter th' Great! what has happened to 'em?"

This raised another howl.

"Fightin' Harry has happened to 'em," was the instant reply; "Fightin' Harry, th' Chief o' Chained Cyclone."

"You seem to forget that most all of you had a hand in it near the end," Harry reminded.

"No, we didn't, nuther," was the prompt denial; "you done it all yerself. You are th' biggest boss that ever struck this burg."

"Our opinions differ on that point, but that does not alter the fact that we 'got there just the same,' as the boys say."

"Bet yer life it don't! An' you kin do it again, too, if it is necessary. We will back ye 'gainst th' hull kit an' kaboodle of 'em."

"That's what we will!" was the shout from all.

To record all that was said in the next few minutes is impossible, so we will pass it over hastily and get on. Some of the jubilant victors made an examination of their fallen foes, to learn whether any of them had been killed, and found that they were all alive.

Cinnamon Jim was the first to come to. He uttered two or three groans, and finally managed to sit up. And the howl of laughter that greeted him was loud and long. He was indeed a sight to behold.

"W-w-where be I?" he gasped, as he tried hard to get his eyes open far enough to see. "W-w-was it a 'sposion? an' was any one else killed?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" was the response he got. "You bet it was a 'sposion, Cinnamon; an' if you could look around you would see a good many more in th' same fix as ye be yerself."

After a good deal of exertion the fallen chief managed to get one eye open just far enough to view the scene, and then the magnitude of his defeat dawned upon him.

"Tribulation!" he exclaimed, "how many of ye pitched onder us?"

"There is th' feller that done it all," was the reply he got, and the man indicated was Fighting Harry.

Harry did not make any further denial, thinking it could do no harm for the rascal to entertain a wholesome fear of him.

Cinnamon looked at him in wonderment.

"An' he ain't got a single scratch!" he ejaculated.

Drawn by the noise, the crowd in the room had multiplied until there was now scarcely room to stand. And the larger it grew the more boisterous it became.

Sledge-hammer Gabe was the next man to recover his ideas, and he could not see at all. Try as he would, his eyes would not open.

"What in th' name o' nightshade has been goin' on?" he demanded. "It is darker'n Yejupt. What're ye all howlin' about?"

"Gabe," said Cinnamon, "we're done up this time fer sure."

"But what is it doin' so dark?"

"Feel o' yer face an' you will know."

Gabe slowly passed his hand over his face, which had now the appearance of a badly bruised pumpkin, and cried:

"Crawlin' snakes! what a sight I must be! Have I been turned inside out? An' who done it?"

Louder and louder rung the laughter.

"That is about what has happened," he was assured, "an' th' man what did th' job was Fightin' Harry. You don't want ter fool with him no more, fer he is loaded up ter th' muzzle."

One by one the others came to, and as fast as they did so they were set in a row against the wall. Finally all had in a measure recovered, and the six of them who could see expressed the opinion that the other eight had been run through a quartz mill. Their appearance as a whole defies description, so no attempt in that line will be made.

Caleb Hartshorne had recovered from his fright

and anxiety, and was now as happy as any one else.

"This is th' best thing that ever happened in this town," he declared. "It is to be hoped it will settle this king-bully rule for once and all. I am willin' ter stand all th' damage that has been done, jest for the satisfaction I have had out of the thing. It has done me a heap of good."

This was quite a change of tune, but it was quite in accord with good sense, and the extent of damage now being definitely known there was no further cause for apprehension in that line.

"Right you are!" cried the crowd; "it is th' best thing that ever happened to this burg. It will show th' terrors that they can't run th' town no longer."

"Rah fer Fightin' Harry!"

"Rah fer th' Chief o' Chained Cyclone!"

"Hip—hip—hurra-a-ah!" rung the rousing cheer, and everybody joined in. That is to say—everybody save the vanquished terrors.

"An' now what d'ye say ter havin' a big parade in honor of th' event?" proposed some one.

"That's jest what we'll do!" was the unanimous shout; "we'll have a parade! A reg'lar old-time jubilee parade, wi' red fire, blue smoke, zig-zag lightnin', an' so-forth!"

"Whoop! that is th' very thing! An' we'll carry Fightin' Harry on our shoulders at th' head of th' line, an' these heur chopped-up galoots shall trot along after him."

"You are welcome to your parade," said Harry, "but I do not care to figure in it."

"That won't do at all!" was the immediate cry. "This town is bound ter do th' white thing by you now, an' we won't let ye refuse if ye want ter. Git ready fer th' march, feller-cits, an' if we don't wake up the natives it will be 'cause they're dead."

"You will have to humor them," observed Tripman to Harry.

"It looks that way," was the response, "but I'd rather take a drubbing than do it."

"You'd better humor them; you won't lose anything by it."

"You don't ketch us takin' part in no sich show as that," declared Cinnamon, flatly.

"Nary time!" chimed in Gabe and the others.

"We don't, eh?" was the retort; "we'll show you about that."

The idea once fairly started, the people lost no time in getting ready for the fun. Men hastened around with all the excitement of a heated political contest, proclaiming the event everywhere, and in less than twenty minutes the whole town was in a perfect boil of excitement.

A rope was found and the defeated terrors were tied together two by two, Cinnamon Jim in the lead, and even those who had been in the fight but had run away were captured, after a little time, and forced into the "harness" with their sorry-looking compeers.

Fighting Harry tried hard to beg off from taking part in the demonstration, but the people would not hear to it, and knowing that it would not do for him to run counter to their wishes too strongly, thus risking their good-will after having earned it so completely, he at last consented to let them do with him as they would.

A big door was quickly brought, a chair was placed upon it, and Harry was invited to take his seat in it. This he did, and then the door was carefully lifted up and set upon the shoulders of ten strong men.

This done, six men with torches took up their positions on each side of the honored victor, and the procession started.

Immediately behind Harry came Cinnamon Jim and his gang, all bound in the rope, the most miserable-looking lot of humans that was ever herded together. Other torch-bearers marched on each side of them, and they were displayed to the best—or worst—advantage.

An old base-drum and several tin pans furnished the music for the occasion, and taken all in all it was by far the greatest pageant the town of Chained Cyclone had ever witnessed.

Behind the "music" marched the citizens, four abreast, with one torch-bearer ahead of every four, and as soon as the procession was fairly started the fun commenced.

"Hip—hip—hurra-a-a-ah!" they all cheered together; "hurrah for Fightin' Harry, the Chief of Chained Cyclone! Hurra-a-a-ah! hurra-a-a-ah! hurra-a-a-ah! Hip—hip—hurra-a-a-a-ah! Whoop-oo-oo-ooop!"

It was a cheer and a whoop that ought to have been heard two miles away at least, and as it was ended there was a grand volley of pistol-shots from every man in the line who had a re-

volver to shoot with, and there were very few who had none.

The big drum and the tin pans were pounded "for all they were worth;" every man cheered his loudest; the torches were waved; and at the close of every big cheer a salute was fired.

When the parade arrived at the saloons where Cinnamon Jim and his crowd made their headquarters, a halt was ordered, and their leader, one Hiram Goodblood, a mining boss, made a speech.

"Men of Cyclone," he said in substance, "it gives me pleasure to introduce to you Mr. Harry Dentwood, better known as Fighting Harry; and I introduce him as the one and only chief of Chained Cyclone. Behold in the van fifteen of the noted fighters of our burg. Take particular note of their appearance. Don't they look as though they had been running through a double line of Injuns a mile long? Rather. But they haven't. They have had a brush with Fighting Harry, that is all."

This was given a great deal more at length, and was greeted with a rousing cheer; and then a speech was demanded from Harry.

Harry complied. He stood up and told them that having been sent to their town to take care of the railroad company's interests, he meant to do it. He was in favor of peace and order, he declared, but when a fight was forced upon him he generally did his best to make it interesting. He sincerely hoped that this was the last affair of the kind in which he should have to take part.

His speech was a jolly one, of good length, and when he resumed his seat the cheer that was given was deafening. The pageant moved on then, and after half an hour more of hilarious jollification, Harry was carried back to the hotel, the miserable lot of prisoners were set free, and in an hour more the town was wrapt in slumber.

CHAPTER IX.

MORE ABOUT TOM.

LET us return to Wah Tom, the heathen Chinese, who it was intended from the first should have a certain important role in our story.

When he went out of the Gilded Moonlight Hotel, he meandered down the street in a very thoughtful mood.

There was something on the Celestial's mind, but what that something was it might have been hard to guess. If any of those in the hotel could have seen him now, it might have come to mind that the name of Hope Maunders, provided that Wah Tom's story had been doubted, had caused him to exhibit considerable emotion, and some connection between that and his present serious demeanor might have been established.

But no one who had observed him in the hotel was there to see him now, and it is more than likely that no attention would have been paid to him if there had been.

We, however, with our superior privileges, will follow him and see what there was to be learned.

He walked along slowly, with his head bowed, and seemed to take no heed whatever of his surroundings.

Presently he muttered:

"Me heap wonder what Hope Maunders's doin' out here in West. Mebbe she want to find some one. Me don't know; allee samee me try find out."

Hal the worthy Wah Tom's statement concerning the pain in his side, when the landlord of the Gilded Moonlight mentioned the name of Hope Maunders, had been a little fable, then.

Now, what could that young lady, Miss Maunders, be to this saffron-tinted son of the kingdom of flowers? Why should the mere mention of her name cause him to turn pale?—if Chinamen can be said to turn pale. Was there some crime behind it all, in which Wah Tom was concerned? Had he at some time or other been guilty of some heinous wrong to the Maunders family, the recollection of which now caused him to tremble at the mention of the name?

We have learned, casually, that Miss Maunders had come to the West in quest of a lost sister. Could it be that Wah Tom knew something of her whereabouts? Be that as it might, it was clear that he was in some way interested in the name of the young lady at the hotel.

It was clear, too, that he surmised that she might be looking for some one. Who could that "some one" be? Perhaps it was the lost sister; perhaps it was himself.

When the Chinese had gone a little further, he muttered again:

"Me heap wonder what she doin' out here, anyhow. How she know where to come? It

looker like she mean business every time, sure pop. Wah Tom he have look out."

The last observation was made with something of a weary smile.

The Chinaman went on in silence then until he came to his place of business. Unlocking the door of his little den, he let himself in, and closing and locking the door behind him, he drew a red curtain over the window to shut out prying eyes.

This done, he turned up the light, which had been left burning dimly, and sat down.

For a long time he sat in perfect silence, busied with his thoughts, and at last two great tears welled from his eyes and ran down his yellow cheeks.

"Huh!" he exclaimed, as he dashed them spitefully away. "Wah Tom one great fool. What Wah Tom care for anybody any more? Young woman mebbly lookin' for somebody, but allee samee she never find 'em. Somebody dead long 'go, an' that settle 'em. No more come to life till have sweet revenge; that all live for now. But, Wah Tom he git things mixed up. Better he keepee still, not think out 'loud any more."

With this the Chinese ceased speaking, and when he had wiped his eyes dry he rose up, took up his light, and went into an adjoining room where he slept.

If he was guilty of crime, his tears proved that he had a tender heart, and that he was not altogether bad.

Wah Tom's place of business was under a big saloon and boarding-house. This was owned by an Irishman named Dennis O'Mara. Dennis managed the saloon, while his wife, Margaret, "run" the boarding-house.

Dennis was a big, raw-boned man, with a temper as evil as his face was evil-looking. He ruled over the frequenters of his saloon with an iron hand, and his word there was law. His temper and his prowess as a fighter were well known, and even such men as Cinnamon Jim and his clan had long stood in awe of him.

Margaret, his wife, was a woman of about the same build, but her temper was of altogether another sort. Hers was even and almost gentle, but she had nevertheless enough firmness and determination of character to hold the reins over her part of the establishment with as steady a hand as did her husband over his.

This couple had never had any children of their own, but they had, about four years prior to the time of our story, adopted a little girl whom they were bringing up. We say had adopted her, but that was not just correct. The father of the little one, or at any rate a man claiming to be her father, had brought her to them, telling them that her mother was dead, and requesting them to take care of her until he called for her, which he promised to do at no distant day.

The little one was then only about two years old, and the kind heart of Mrs. O'Mara would not permit her to refuse the man's request, though she told him at the time that she could not be bothered with the child very long.

The man promised faithfully that he would soon come for it, but that was the last that was seen or heard of him.

Strange as it may seem, Mrs. O'Mara had not thought to ask the child's name, and the man had not given it. Whether he had omitted this intentionally or not, they could not know, but they were of the opinion that he had not. He had seemed to be a very gentlemanly man, and had spoken of the child's mother with much feeling.

But Mrs. O'Mara was not left long without a name for her little *protégée*. When she came to disrobe it she found that nearly every article of its clothing was marked with the name "Gertrude Fenway," neatly and prettily worked with silk.

From the very first, however, she had begun calling the child "Blue Eyes," and now that was about the only name it knew.

This little girl was now six years old, and was as pretty as a pretty flower. She had blue eyes, golden hair, and was altogether lovely.

It was now and again remarked, by those who had an eye open to the fitness of things, what a shame it was that so sweet a child should be left in the hands of the O'Maras. To these observations, whenever they reached her ears, Mrs. O'Mara gave out the retort that other people had better mind their own business and they would have enough to do.

It had not taken the good-hearted Irishwoman long to learn to love the child, and now she cared little whether its parent ever came for it or not. Blue Eyes was the light of her life. She fully realized that its present surroundings were not such as it should have, but Dennis and she were

rapidly amassing a fortune, and did not intend to remain forever at Chained Cyclone.

"Whin we go back East," the good woman boasted, "th' child shall have an iddycation that will equal any lady's in dhe land; so she shall." And in her heart she meant every word of it.

Blue Eyes was the pet of the whole town, and not a man there, good or bad, but would have almost laid down his life for her if occasion required. And no one loved the little girl more than did Wah Tom, the Chinese. And, strange as it may seem, Blue Eyes was strongly attached to the "yaller-skinned washee."

Wah Tom had come to the town of Chained Cyclone a few weeks after the little child had been left in the care of the O'Maras, and in looking around for a place to set up his tub and ironing-board, had taken a fancy to the then vacant space under the saloon.

At first Dennis would not hear to the proposition at all. The idea of a Chinaman having quarters beneath his roof—Never!

The wily Chinese pleaded his cause with Mrs. O'Mara so ably and so well, however, that she finally entered the lists on his side, and the consent of her better-half was at last gained.

Wah Tom lost no time in moving in and setting up his tubs, and began business immediately.

The snowy whiteness of the clothes he turned out of his "soap-mill" soon attracted the attention of the big-hearted Irishwoman, and before long he counted her among his customers.

From the very first time he saw little Blue Eyes, the Chinese seemed drawn toward her.

"She makee me t'ink of little baby sister me had in China," he explained to Mrs. O'Mara, "an' me likee her velly much."

And he certainly did like the child, if his devotion to it went to prove anything. Whenever he had any spare time, he would request Mrs. O'Mara to let him "takee baby out walkee," and he would carry it around for an hour or more at a time.

This was a great help to the busy Irishwoman, and as soon as she had learned that the Chinaman was to be trusted, she allowed him to have the child whenever he asked the favor.

When Blue Eyes became old enough to walk and talk right well, she spent a good portion of her time down in the washee's den, and Wah Tom was never so happy as when she was seated upon one end of his ironing-table, entertaining him with her childish prattle.

Once the child was sick, and but for the devotion of Wah Tom on that occasion, as Mrs. O'Mara ever stoutly maintained, it would have died. She knew little or nothing about the care of children, and knew less what to do for them when sick, and the help and advice of her "heathen" neighbor came in handy on that occasion. The child was ill for two weeks, and Wah Tom's devotion to it was untiring.

When it at last got well, Dennis O'Mara declared that there never was such a Chinaman as Wah Tom, and told the Celestial that he could have the rooms under the saloon as long as he wanted to stay there.

This went to show that Dennis had a soft place in his heart for the little one, in spite of his evil-looking face and bad temper.

From that time the friendship between the little girl and the "washee" was firmly rooted, and on the part of the Chinese it was a friendship that amounted to love and devotion. And from that time, too, the Chinese was looked upon as one of the members of the household, almost.

Thus stood Wah Tom at the time of our story.

Chinamen have a hard time of it in some towns of the "wild and woolly" West, where their room is looked upon as better than their company; but in this case the Chinaman had decidedly the advantage. He was under the protection of Dennis O'Mara, and the man who did a wrong to Wah Tom had to answer for it to him.

With this knowledge of Wah Tom laid before us, we are only the more puzzled concerning him. What knew he of Hope Maunders, or of her lost sister? What was the cause of his silent tears, which we have witnessed? There was a mystery here of some kind, but what could it be?

Taking a glance into the "washee's" room at a later hour, after the excitement of the jubilee parade was over, we find him curled up in bed and fast asleep, his long cue stretched out over the pillow like a black snake.

CHAPTER X.

AFTER MANY DAYS.

THE morning following the night of the exciting events we have recorded dawned clear and

bright, and there was nothing to indicate that there had been such a big "time" in town so recently.

That is to say, there was nothing at dawn to point to it; but it was only a little later when evidence of it began to appear.

By the time the sun was an hour high several men had made their appearance, the general aspect of whom went to indicate that they had spent the night in a tiger's (literal) den, and had had a rough time of it.

There were a few men in town, too, who did not put in an appearance all day, one of whom was Sledge-hammer Gabe.

Slowly and wearily these kindred spirits wended their way to the saloon of Dennis O'Mara, which, by the way, was known as the Anchored Tempest, a name given it as a parody on Chained Cyclone; and there they each proceeded to get outside of his morning "bracer" immediately upon arrival.

"Phwat is dhe matter wid yez all dbis marn-in'?" inquired Dennis, innocently, when about half a dozen of them had assembled.

Of course the proprietor of the place knew well enough what was "the matter," for only the dead of the town had slept through the uproar of the night before.

"Matter enough, that is what th' matter is," growled Cinnamon Jim. "If you had had a hand in it you might 'a' found out fer yourself."

Dennis laughed heartily.

"Prehaps ol moight," he commented, "an' thin again prehaps ol moightn't. Ye can't mos' always sometimes tell, ye know."

"D'ye think ye could git away with that chunk'o' livin' dynamite?" Cinnamon boldly asked, bringing his only available eye to bear upon Dennis as he put the question.

"Don't know," was the laconic response; "ol niver tackled th' man yet that ol didn't git away with."

"Well, we'd like ter see ye tackle this one; hey, Mike?" to Bullet-head Mike, who was among the number present.

"That we would," that worthy agreed.

"Well, dhe chances is dhat ol won't," said Dennis, "for it's not loikely dhat ol'll have any occasion ter quarrel wid dhe young man."

"Which may be mighty lucky fur ye," observed Cinnamon.

Dennis smiled. Confident in his own prowess, he cared nothing for the opinion of such men as these.

"You have worn dhe belt as champion of dhe town for a long teime," he reminded; "d'ye m'ane ter give it over ter dhis young feller?"

Jim smiled a sickly smile.

"There don't seem ter be much of a choice fer me in th' matter," he owned. "Th' young feller has got th' belt, an' has put it on. What am I goin' ter do about it?"

"That is th' question," echoed Bullet-head Mike. "What be we goin' ter do about it?"

"It does look bad fur yez, an' no mishtake about that," Dennis allowed. "Ol ruther think yez'll have ter let bad enough alone. Will yez go fur him again?"

"No, not any more in mine, thank 'e," hastened Bullet-head Mike.

"No, ner in mine, nuther," chimed in one of the others.

The rest of them were silent on the question, except Cinnamon Jim.

"I won't have nothin' ter say, one way nor t'other," was his ground, "but if that young feller turns up missin' some o' these mornin's, don't feel s'prised about it."

"You'd best have a care how ye talk loike dhat," cautioned Dennis.

"How else is a feller ter talk, when that is what he means?" Cinnamon sullenly demanded.

And so their talk ran on. It was clear that most of the men who had had a hand in the fray of the previous night had quite enough to last them for some time, and were not anxious to meet the iron-like fists of Fighting Harry again. It was equally clear that Cinnamon Jim had murder in his heart, and that nothing short of the life of the brave young railroad agent would satisfy him.

Some time later another man came into the Anchored Tempest.

This new arrival was none other than St. Clare Pembroke, the gambler-sport who had arrived in town on the previous night.

He looked pale and tired, as though he had not been able to obtain much rest during the night, as had indeed been the case, owing to the blow he had received on the forehead at the hands of Fighting Harry; and the lump on his forehead was so large and painful that it interfered with his putting on his hat in its customary position.

"Good-morning, sir," he saluted, as he advanced to the bar.

"Good-mornin'," returned Dennis, respectfully.

"I guess you do not remember me," the man observed.

"No more oI do," the proprietor owned; "but thin oI have seen so many faces durin' my toime dhat it is not to be wondered at, sor."

"True enough; but there is reason why you should remember me, if you could only bring it to mind. Let your mind go back about four years, and perhaps you can then recall where you have seen me before."

The face of the Irishman took on a hardened expression at once. It now came to his mind where he had seen the stranger.

"I see you remember me now," the man observed.

"Yis, oI know ye now," Dennis owned. "Wait till me helper comes in an' thin we'll go inter dhe back room and have a talk."

"All right," St. Clair agreed. "I am in no hurry."

With this he turned away to take a seat while he waited the pleasure of the proprietor, and as he did so he was accosted by Cinnamon Jim.

"Say, mister," inquired that worthy, "was you there too?"

"Was I where?" demanded the gambler sport.

"Was you in th' tornady?"

"I do not understand what you are driving at, my man."

"I ask ye if ye was in th' blizzard," Cinnamon further endeavored to make clear.

"Still I do not catch on to what you mean," the gambler disclaimed.

All the others were grinning painfully, for it was impossible for them to distort their features into a smile without pain; and as St. Clair looked from one to another, it slowly dawned upon his mind what Cinnamon Jim meant.

They were a sad and sorry sight, with their eyes and noses all battered out of shape and semblance, and it must be, the gambler sport rightly thought, that the man referred to the unsightly protuberance he had on his forehead.

"What I mean," Cinnamon hastened to make clearer, "is that you must ha' been inter th' battle last night, ter judge by th' beauty-spot on yer forehead."

The gambler's face darkened.

"Yes, I see now what you are getting at," he owned. "I was not in the general *melee* to which you refer, however."

"But I dare venter ter say that you bucked th' same tiger, though," persisted Cinnamon.

"Say," the gambler sport suddenly asked, "is it true that that young railroad agent whipped the whole crowd of you last night, and single-handed at that?"

"No!" denied Cinnamon hotly, "it ain't! Th' hull crowd of 'em at th' hotel pitched onto us. Ain't it so, fellers?"

"That's what it is," supported Bullet-head Mike.

This was a change of tune again. With none but members of their own clan to hear them, they had owned the superiority of Fighting Harry; but now that an outsider had dropped in, they had a different story to tell.

"That was about what I thought of it," the gambler reflected. "It does not stand to reason that one man could get away with so many in a fair fight. That fellow is good stuff, though, and he got in a trick on me that I was not looking for last night. That little matter is not settled, however, and you will see the tables turned if you live long enough."

"D'ye mean ter tackle him again?" asked Cinnamon.

"I mean to challenge him to a duel to the death!" was the hissed reply.

"Whew!" that battered worthy whistled, "that will mean a big time for th' town o' Cyclone. When d'ye mean ter go fer him?"

"I shall challenge him to-day, and unless he eats crow, there will be a meeting before the sun goes down."

"Bully fer you!" was the cry; "an' we hope that ye sallervate him th' first pop."

O'Mara's helper came in at this time, and Dennis announced that he was ready for the private interview. He led the way into a little room at the rear of the saloon, the gambler following him.

Dennis closed the door after them, and they sat down.

"Now," the proprietor of the Anchored Tempest announced, "oI am ready ter talk wid ye."

"Well," opened the gambler, "we will come right to business. What of the baby I left in your care four years ago?"

"It stroikes me that ye haven't been in any hurry ter come and foind out," was the retort.

"That is true; but it has been impossible for me to do so. I will not stop to explain why, for it is not necessary. I am here now to take the child away, and am ready to pay you any reasonable sum you may demand for taking care of her so long."

"O'I'll have ter take yer word fer what ye say, oI suppose," commented Dennis. "Dhe child is well an' hearty, since ye ask after her; an' now let me ask ye phwat yer name is, mister."

"My name? My name is St. Clair Pembroke."

"Just so. You didn't leave any name behind ye when ye was here afore. Now phwat is dhe name of dhe little gurrel?"

The gambler sport bit his lip. For some reason or other this was a question that he did not like. He hesitated only a moment, however, and then answered:

"Her name is Gertrude Fenway. I thought I told you her name when I left her with you."

"All dhe same you didn't, though," declared Dennis; "but you did say dhat you was her father, and if dhat is dhe case, bow is it dhat her name is Fenway and yours Pembroke?"

This was a question that staggered the sport for a moment. He soon smiled, however, and came up with a ready reply.

"My dear, good fellow," he said, patronizingly, "have you not lived long enough in the West to know that a man may have more names than one, when it suits his convenience? I see that I must make a confession to you. My real name is not St. Clair Pembroke, but Waldo Fenway. This is between me and you, privately."

"Can you prove dhat?" Dennis demanded, as he bent his scowling face and searching eyes full upon the gambler's face; "can you prove it?"

There was an awkward pause. It was clear that the interview was not running toward a pleasant termination.

CHAPTER XI.

WAH TOM'S SECOND SHOCK.

THE manner of the gambler sport took on a change.

"I cannot see that it is necessary for me to prove it," he resented. "You recognize me as the man who left that child with you, and now that I have come for her it is your business to return her to me. Whatever your charge is, you understand, I am ready to pay."

"Now it won't pay ye ter git in a huff about it, not a bit," Dennis warned. "You will have ter prove yer right ter dhe child, or ye don't git her; dhat is dhe long an' dhe short av dhe whole business."

"What do you mean?" the gambler demanded, hotly.

"Just phwat oI say. Now it won't do ye any good ter git yer back up, fer Dennis O'Mara is a man that shtands to his words, every time. You prove yer right ter have dhe little gurrel, an' you shall have her; otherwise she shtays roight where she is. You hear me."

The gambler had got up and was pacing the floor to and fro excitedly. There was only one thought in his mind now. Was he to be balked?

"But, my friend," he argued, "you have no right to keep her."

"OI admit that," coincided Dennis; "and nayther have oI any roight ter turn her over to any wan else widout knowin' phwat roight he has to her."

"But you have admitted that you know I am the man that left her in your care four years ago."

"Yis, oI admit dhat."

"Then why did you not bring up this question of right at that time?"

"You said ye was dhe child's father."

"And so I say now."

"Yis, but now you come to me wid' a double shtory on yer tongue. First you are St. Clair Pembroke, and next you are Waldo Fenway. Now how dhe divil am oI ter know who ye are?"

"Then you cannot take my word in the matter, eh?"

"Phwy should oI?"

"Then you set me down for a liar, do you?"

"OI don't say dhat at all at all. Phwat oI want is proof dhat you are dhe father of dhe child, an' when you presint dhat you shall have her widout a word. Now if you can prove dhat, go ahead an' do it."

The man, whatever his name was, was greatly excited at being thus balked. It was clearly something that he had not looked for at all. And

it did, in truth, place him in a bad position, provided he was indeed the father of the child, as he claimed to be.

For a moment he paced the floor in silence, and then he turned abruptly upon the Irishman and demanded:

"What is your reason for holding the child? You were rather reluctant about taking her from me when I brought her to you, if my memory serves me right."

"You seem ter forget, sor, dhat dhe little wan has been in my house these four years, an' dhat oI niver had a child av me own. She has growed into my rough old heart, she has, and bad and hard a man as oI am, oI love her."

"Oh-ho! I see."

"Yis; an' not only dhat, but me wife loves her, too, an' you kin set it down dhat we don't m'ane ter part wid her unless we know whose hands she is goin' into."

This was an obstacle in the way that the man had not thought of. He had expected that when he called for the child she would be given over to him without a word, and that the couple would be glad enough to get rid of her and pocket a neat sum for their trouble.

For a moment again he was silent.

"Well," he presently said, "you can offer no objections to my seeing my child, surely."

"Not dhe l'aste," was the prompt response; "wait a minnit an' oI will have her brought down."

—Stepping out into the hall, he called:

"Hello, Marg!"

"Phwat d'yez want?" came the response, after a moment's delay.

"Bring little Blue Eyes and come down here," Dennis ordered.

"She'll be down in a minnit," he said, as he stepped back into the room.

In a short time the door opened and Mrs. O'Mara came in, leading little Blue Eyes by the hand. The woman's face was slightly pale, as though something had told her that the time had come when she must part with her little *protegee* and at sight of St. Clair it grew ashy white.

"You!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, I," said the gambler, bowing; "I have come for my little daughter."

As he said this, his eyes turned to the little girl, and his face lighted up with honest admiration. The little one had just been washed and dressed for the day, and looked more like a pretty life-size doll than like a child of real flesh and blood.

"You ought to have come long ago, whin ye said ye would," the woman complained, "an' not left dhe child wid us till she's bound up in our affections."

"I am sorry that such is the case," the man returned, "but the delay has been unavoidable."

"And do you m'ane to take her from us at wanst?"

"Such is my desire, if you and your husband will allow me to have her. I am prepared to pay you whatever reasonable sum you may demand for the trouble she has been to you."

The child heard this with fear, and clung trembling to the hand of her tried and true friend.

"You will go with me, will you not?" the man asked, addressing the child; "I am your papa."

"Me go if mammy and Wah Tom go too," was the timid reply; and she clung all the closer to Mrs. O'Mara's hand.

"Who is Wah Tom?" the man asked, wondering.

"He is only dhe Chinese washee, who k'apes down-stairs," explained Dennis; and he added:

"I have told dhe man, Maig, dhat whin he proves dhat he is dhe father av the little wan, he can have her, and not before. He has two names dhat he is travelin' under, an' lovin' dhe little child as we do, it is no more dhan roight dhat he should prove himself before we give her over to him."

"So oI think, too," declared the woman, as she drew back with the child; "we want ter know phwat we are doin'."

The man hereupon went over the same line of argument he had used with Dennis, but failed to carry his point. The couple stood firm on the ground Dennis had taken, and nothing could move them.

"Then you refuse to deliver her to me, do you?" he demanded finally.

"Yis," answered Dennis, "until you prove yer roight to have her."

"Very well, then, I shall set about doing that immediately. When I think it over I can see that you are right, and that you are taking the proper course. I shall obtain the proof as soon

"I can, and will then come for her again. Of course you will then have her ready for me."

"Yis," Dennis promised, "whin you come wid dhe proof you shall have her. In dhe m'ane time you want to k'ape away from us."

The Irish woman took the child up-stairs again, and Dennis and the gambler sport passed out through the saloon.

It was plain to be seen that there was little love lost between them, and that the gambler's pleasant manner was forced.

"It is rather hard," he complained, "that a man isn't allowed to have possession of his own child; but I shall bring the required proofs as soon as I possibly can, and then I shall expect you to keep your word with me."

"Dhe word of Dennis O'Mara is considered as good as his bond," was the Irishman's response.

"If that is the case," was the parting remark, "we shall have no trouble when I come again."

St. Clair Pembroke, if that was his name, retraced his steps toward the hotel in a very agitated frame of mind.

"Curse the luck!" he muttered as he walked along. "Who would have thought of meeting with this objection to their parting with the brat? Now, what am I to do? How can I go to work to prove that I am really Waldo Fenway, and that this is my child? It will be a difficult task. Why did I not think far enough to come here under that name, and no other?"

These reflections did not tend to improve his temper.

"It will be impossible for me to prove it without—" And there he stopped short. "It will be dangerous to try it," he began anew. "No, I will not think of that; but I will think of stealing the kid, and that without delay. I will go away soon, and a little money put out in the right direction will bring the brat to me in no time. Then I can soon cover up my tracks so that Dennis O'Mara nor any other Irishman can ever find me. They have taken a liking to the young one, it seems, and want to keep her in spite of me; but I will show them a trick worth two of theirs."

A sinister smile lighted up his face as these thoughts ran through his mind. He had little intention of being balked in the game he was playing.

"Once I get hold of the kid," he further reflected, "and get out East, then I can declare myself, prove my case, and then I shall finger old Maunders's fortune. Ha, ha, ha! there are better things in store for me than I ever dreamed of. And the brat, too, she is a beauty, I swear. Hang me if I ain't proud of her. I'll educate her for the stage, if she has anything of her mother's voice for singing, and there will be a royal income for me right along. Oh! this world is not all bad yet; I find there are some good things to be had if a fellow only knows how to lay hold of them."

So his thoughts ran on.

When about half-way from the saloon to the hotel he saw a Chinaman coming from the direction of the hotel with a basket of clothes on his arm.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, "this must be Wah Tom the washee. I suppose the landlord has given him my duds, as I asked him to do. I will inquire."

The two approached each other, but the Chinaman did not see the gambler sport until he was right upon him, and not, in fact, until the sport hailed him.

"Hello, John!" he exclaimed, "where are you going with your head down so? Have you got time to stop and carry a trunk?"

Wah Tom came to a sudden halt and looked up, and then a strange thing happened. The basket of clothes fell from his arm; his mouth dropped open; his face took on a deathly look, and for an instant he staggered as though he would fall.

The sport could but look at him in surprise. "What in blazes is the matter with ye?" he roughly demanded; "have you got the jams?"

What was the "matter" indeed? This was the second "knock-out" of the kind Wah Tom had recently experienced. Was it that peculiar "kink" in his side again?

CHAPTER XII.

IT GROWS INTERESTING.

THE rough words of the gambler sport did more to bring the Chinaman to himself than anything else could have done.

Clapping his hand to his side, the "washee" gave vent to a groan, and gasped for breath. This lasted for a moment, and then he made out to speak.

"Some day that kink in side takee Wah Tom off mighty quick. Gittee bad kink, takee allee wind out. Some day no gittee wind back any more, then go up flume, sure pop, evely time."

"I should say you would, if this is the way it serves you," the sport commented. "I thought I had frightened you out of a year's growth. What I stopped you for was to inquire if the landlord at the hotel gave you my duds to wash. My name is Pembroke."

"Yes, me gottee 'em," Wah Tom assured, as he busied himself in gathering up what clothes had fallen from the basket in its fall; "me got 'em all light."

"Very good. Do them up as soon as you can, for I want to leave town to-morrow or next day."

"All light."

The Chinese did not look up any more, but busied himself with his basket, and in a moment Pembroke went on his way.

"Not a bad-looking John," the latter observed, after they had parted. "So, that is the heathen the little girl has taken a liking to, is it? Well, my good John, make the most of her while you can, for she won't be with you many days, I promise you that."

And the Chinaman, as he looked after the retreating form of the flashily-dressed gamster, sibilated the two words—

"At last!"

And these words, and the manner in which they were uttered, went to prove that the kink in his side had been of about the same nature as the one he had had in the hotel on the previous night, only worse.

Picking up his basket, he went on his way to his place of business, his face having an expression half of sternness and half of fright.

There was a mystery about this Chinaman which did not appear on the surface. And it would seem that no one but the worthy Wah Tom himself knew what that mystery was.

As soon as he reached his den he dropped his basket and made his way up-stairs to see Mrs. O'Mara.

"Phwy, Tom, phwat is dhe matter wid yez?" that good woman exclaimed, as soon as he entered the door. "If yer face wasn't so yaller o' would say that ye was pale. Phwat has happened yez?"

"Me had bad dleam last night, mebbly," was the heathen's explanation, as he sat down.

"Yez had a bad dream, was it? And phwat was yer dream? Go ahead and tell me dhat, an' thin o' I have somethin' ter tell you."

"All light. Me dleam bad man come steal Blue Eyes away. Want keep eyes wide open allee samee now; mebbly dleam come so. Allee samee me just seen bad man me dleam 'bout."

"You have seen him?"

"Yes, sure pop."

"And phwat fer a lookin' man is he?"

"Him fine sport feller, evely time; wear good clothes, have high hat on, have velly fine boots, and allee samee too have velly fine bump on front of him face."

"That's him!"

"You seen him?"

"Yes; he has been here."

"What him want?"

"Phwy, he is dhe man phwat brought Blue Eyes to me four years ago, and he is afther wantin' ter take her away ag'in."

"Don't let her go," Wah Tom exclaimed with earnestness.

"Don't fret yersel' about that, me yaller-skinned friend; sure an' Dinnis tould him he moight have her whin he brought proof dhat he had a roight ter her, but not afore."

"Allee samee bully for Dennis! Makee him plove evelything, else no gittee Blue Eyes. Me know him bad man; want lookee out he don't steal her?"

"Phwat! d'ye know him?"

"Me mean me have dleam 'bout him; him velly bad man in dleam."

"Oh! Well, he won't get dhe little gurrel wid'out showin' beyand doubt dhat he is her father, and o'I'm not sayin' fer sure dhat he'll get her dhen. Wan thing is sure, he won't get no chance to shtear her, you can depend on dhat."

They talked over the case for some time, and then the Chinaman returned to his own domain.

Closing the door after him, he stepped into the inner room where he slept, and opening a box he took from it a neat, medium-sized revolver. This he carefully loaded, and when that was done he slipped it into a convenient pocket somewhere under his loose garment.

"Be some fun 'lound here sometime, allee samee, mebbly," he muttered, "and me wantee keep top eye open, evely time, sure pop. Better

Wah Tom keepee still, not talkee too much when he thinkee; gittee things mixed up. Allee same Wah Tom know what he doin'."

With this he went about his work, trying to sing a little as he did so, but singing proved a failure, as he was clearly in no mood for it, so he soon gave it up.

It was some time in the forenoon, and Harry Dentwood was seated in his office at the railroad station, when there came a gentle, half-timid knock at the office door.

Throwing the door open, the young man found that his caller was a lady. And, much to his surprise, it was none other than Miss Hope Maunders, the lady who had arrived on the late train on the previous night, and whom he and his friend Tripman had befriended and accompanied to the hotel.

"Pardon me, sir," the young lady said sweetly, "but may I rob you of a little of your time?"

"It will be no robbery, if I can be of service to you in any way," Harry answered, gallantly.

"Thank you. I am seeking information, and I have found that a railroad station is generally a good place to get it."

"It will give me pleasure to give you whatever information I can," Harry assured. "If it is anything in my line of business, I am sure I can help you out; but if it is anything concerning the town I may not be of much service to you, for I have not been here long enough to get well-acquainted."

"Oh, I did not know that. But, no matter; I will tell you what I want to find out, and it is just possible that you can help my search along. You may not be very well acquainted with the town, but from what I have heard this morning the town is in a fair way to soon be well-acquainted with you."

This was said archly, and the girl's pretty lips fashioned themselves into a suggestion of a smile.

"We cannot believe all that we hear," Harry modestly parried.

"No, that is true; but I have seen sufficient evidence of it this morning to confirm the rumor. Besides, do not imagine that I slept through all the uproar of last night. I had the pleasure of viewing the grand march from my window."

Harry colored up; he could not help it. He had hoped that the young lady had not seen him in that role.

"Do not think that the ridiculous part in that wild demonstration was of my own seeking," he implored. "I tried hard enough to get out of it, but the citizens would not permit it, so I had to oblige them. But, enough of that. In what way can I be of service to you?"

"I could see by your face that it was not altogether to your liking," the lady averred; "and as you do not care to have it spoken of further I will say no more. And now to state the business that brings me to this town of a wonderful name. I am here in search of a lost sister."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; but I begin to despair of ever finding any trace of her. I have made some inquiries over in the town, but have not been able to learn anything."

"And it is not at all likely that I shall be able to help you any," said Harry, "being, as I am, a stranger here myself."

"It does not look very promising, that is true; nevertheless I will give you the points in the case. You may have heard of the persons I want to find."

"What was your sister's name?"

"Her name was Wakefield. At least that was her name when she left home. I shall have to tell you something of her story, however, before you can understand."

"I can not call to mind any one of that name."

"No, I suppose not, for it is not likely that she was ever known by that name in this part of the country."

"She was married, I take for granted, since your name, as I have learned, is Miss Maunders."

As he said this, Harry gave the title "miss" a slight emphasis.

"That is my name," the young lady affirmed, "and my sister was married, as you suppose. My sister was seven years older than I, and was married when she was seventeen years old to one Morris Wakefield. On the same day, the day of her wedding, her husband was killed. She was married at home, and as soon as the service was over, they were driven to the railroad station, where they took a train for Washington. The train had gone barely two miles when it ran off the track, and among the killed

was Morris Wakefield. It was a sad blow for my sister, who was only slightly injured, and it was a long time before she recovered from it."

"Sad indeed, I should say," Harry commented.

"Yes; but she recovered," with a slight tinge of sarcasm in the tone. "Three years later there came to our place a man named Waldo Fenway. I never saw him, as I was away at school at the time, but it was said that he was good-looking, well-dressed, and very fascinating in manner. Be that as it may, my sister became infatuated with him as soon as they met, and in a short time had promised to marry him. Our father, however, forbade the union; and even forbade Kate's—that was my sister's name—speaking to the man again; and Fenway was warned to keep away from the house. I do not know the cause of father's antipathy to him, but no doubt he had good and sufficient reasons for his action in the affair."

"Undoubtedly."

"Kate, though, did not heed his advice, but ran away with the man, and was never seen at home again. Two years later our mother received a letter from her, from some part of the West, in which she stated that she was married and the mother of a pretty baby girl. From the tone of the letter, though, it was inferred that she was anything but happy. Father was now dead, and mother wrote for Kate to come home, but she was never heard from again. Now mother, too, is dead, and I am the only one of the family left. I have been quite a long time searching for my sister, but now I am beginning to despair of ever finding her. And it is important that I should find her, too, for her own sake. Our grandfather, Felix Maunders, who died a year ago, left his entire fortune to Kate and her child—or children, as she had always been his favorite, and I must find her and make her happy."

CHAPTER XIII.

FIGHTING HARRY CHALLENGED.

It was a simple story and natural, but as the pretty narrator reached the end of it her voice rung with an affecting tone of pathos.

Harry Dentwood was thoughtful for a moment before he made any comment or response of any kind.

Presently he asked:

"Will you permit me to make a few inquiries?"

"Yes," was the answer; "as many as you will."

"Do you know what that Waldo Fenway's business was?"

"My father doubted whether he had any business other than that of being a rascal," as he expressed it.

"Did your father have any positive knowledge about him?"

"I do not know."

"If he had he did not express it?"

"No."

"Then it is very probable he had none, or he would have used it to prevent the marriage. It is likely that he read the man's character pretty well and judged him accordingly, without any positive proof."

"You may be right."

"Now, what has brought you to this particular town in quest of your sister? Have you any clue that points to this town?"

"No, I have no clue that points me here, directly. The letter which my sister sent home was written at the capital of this Territory, and in it she stated that her husband intended starting for a town in the western part of the Territory in a few weeks, and that she would go with him, but she failed to name the town; so you see my only clue is to look for trace of her in some town in this direction."

"And how many towns have you visited?"

"Oh, a hundred or more."

"Then the search is narrowing down."

"Yes; and for that reason I begin to despair."

"Have you advertised?"

"No, sir."

"Why do you not do that? If you were to put a notice in the principal papers of the West, I think it might bring you information from some quarter or other."

"I had not thought much about that. Since I have started to find her myself, however, I have to watch my expenses closely, and could not now spare the money to advertise very extensively—not enough so to do any good, perhaps."

"You can reserve that as a last resort, then. Now I am sorry to say that I am entirely unable to give you any information whatever, but

I never heard the names of any of the parties you have mentioned. If there is anything that I can do to assist you, though, I shall be proud and happy to do it. You have but to command me. By the way, have you seen the postmaster?"

"Yes, I have seen him. That is about the first place where I inquire when I enter a strange town. He could not help me any, however, as he had never heard of the persons I inquired for."

"Well, I will tell you what I will do: I will make diligent inquiries, and if I can learn anything to interest you I will let you know it."

"Thank you. If you will do that, something may come of it."

"I suppose you intend remaining in town a day or two?"

"Yes, I usually remain two or three days in each place. I shall remain at the hotel, and you may come and see me there if you learn anything."

"Thank you. I will do so; and you may be sure that I shall try very hard to learn something that will win for me that privilege."

"I am sure you will do that—I mean that you will do all you can to help me; but even though you are not able to learn anything, please inform me, so that I will know."

"I will certainly do so."

"Thank you, sir; and now I will not take up any more of your time. I am very grateful for your kindness. Good-morning."

"My time is of no moment, and I am only sorry that I have not been able to give you more help. If I can be of assistance to you in any way, do not hesitate to demand my services. Good-morning."

And so for the time they parted.

"She is a charming girl, and no mistake," Harry said to himself as he watched her from a window of his office as she started back to the central part of the town; and he said it in respectful admiration. "I hope I shall know more of her, or know her better. Wonder what Tripman will say when he learns that I have had so pretty a caller? Why, there he comes now."

Tripman was coming from the direction of the town center, and when he met Miss Maunders, she recognized him, and he lifted his hat and bowed gracefully to her.

"I shall have to look out," thought Harry, as he witnessed this, "or he will side-track me. That will never do."

Tripman came on to the station, and then Harry noticed that his face wore a serious and troubled look.

"What is the trouble now?" he demanded; "is your uncle's aunt's grandmother dead?"

"There is trouble enough, I am afraid."

"So I should think, to judge by your face. I expected to see you come in all smiles, after the way you were bowing and scraping to my caller out there. Say, isn't she a pretty girl, though?"

"She certainly is; but you won't be alive to admire her beauty to-morrow, if that card-sharp over there at the hotel can have his way about it."

"What do you mean?"

"Read this and it will tell you."

As he said this Fred handed Harry a note, which the latter immediately opened and read.

It was a challenge from St. Clair Pembroke, demanding a meeting with Harry that afternoon or evening, in which they were to fight to the death.

"He is a fool!" Harry exclaimed, hotly and angrily.

"But he places you in a bad pickle, old boy."

"You are right he does, for I do not want to have anything to do with him. I never had anything to do with a duel in my life, and never want to have anything to do with one."

"You have got one on your hands now, though, and what are you going to do about it?"

"That is what troubles me—what am I going to do about it, sure enough!"

"You will have to meet him; that is the only thing I can see for you to do."

"Or run away," with a grim laugh.

"Oh, yes, I see you doing that already."

"And how does he want to fight me?"

"That is for you to determine. You are the challenged party."

"Oh, yes, that is the way it works, I believe. Well, what would you recommend in the matter?"

"You will want a second."

"I suppose so."

"And if you will accept me, I shall be glad to act in that capacity."

"Certainly, you are my second; and who is to be second on the other side?"

"Ben Fender, one of the saloon-keepers down at the other end of the town. He banded me this, knowing that in all likelihood I would act for you."

"That is all satisfactory so far, but I do not want to meet him."

"Are you afraid of him?"

Harry smiled.

"Hardly that," he declared, "but I have no quarrel with him, and I would rather keep out of his way. I take him to be a loafer and a gambler, and I do not consider him worth fighting with."

"That is true; but you will have to do it, or else lose all the ground you gained last night in the favor of the town's citizens."

"That is true, too; but that does not remove my objections. Where can we find the fellow now, do you think?"

"No doubt he is at the hotel."

"We will walk over there, and I will have a word or two with him."

Harry could leave the office just at that time, and started immediately upon the errand he had suggested.

They had not gone far when Tripman exclaimed:

"There is the fellow now; and isn't that the young lady that he has stopped again?"

"It certainly is she," Harry agreed; "come on a little faster."

When they came nearer they saw that it was indeed Miss Maunders, and that it was the gambler sport who blocked her way.

The couple were on the bridge, about in the place where the lady had been annoyed on the night before.

The young lady looked around as they approached, and seeing who they were, her face lit up.

"Perhaps," Harry and Fred overheard her to say, as she turned back to the man who stood before her, "perhaps you will allow me to pass on now."

What the man said in reply they could not hear, but they saw him offer his arm as though he would escort her back to the hotel.

This was adding insult to injury, and raising her right hand, the girl dealt him a slap in the face with all the force she could command.

The face of the gambler turned hotly red, he took one step forward, with arm outstretched, and had the young lady not sprung back, would have grabbed hold of her wrists.

With a cry of fear the lady turned and ran toward Harry and Fred, and Harry at the same time sprung forward and faced her insulter.

"You cowardly cur!" he cried, "I've a mind to wring your neck for you."

"If you received my note," was the cool and taunting response, "you are aware that you are given a chance to settle whatever differences there may be between us."

"You are a coward, a ruffian, and a villain," retorted Harry, "and I think myself above meeting you in any such way. The only way I will have anything to do with you is to give you the thrashing you deserve right here and now."

"That is the coward's usual loop-hole," the fellow sneered.

"You tested my cowardice last night," Harry reminded.

"That has nothing to do with the present. It is known all over the town that I have challenged you, and unless you meet me you will be the laughing-stock of the whole place."

"No matter about that; what I have to say to you is this: if you speak to this lady again during her stay in town, I will horsewhip you."

"Ha, ha, ha!" the fellow laughed, "a man who is afraid to fight a man with weapons can very easily horsewhip him in talk, in the presence of a woman. Now what I have to say to you is—and leaning slightly forward, he coolly spat upon the town's acknowledged chief."

Instantly Fighting Harry sprung upon him, and quicker than a flash, the gambler was measuring his length in the dusty road.

CHAPTER XIV.

COMING TO A HEAD.

As the gambler sport toppled over, Tripman and the young lady could not help laughing heartily.

It was indeed a ludicrous sight.

His head went down and his heels went up, and for a few moments he lay and floundered around in the dust beautifully.

As quickly as he could he scrambled to his feet, and as he did so his hand flew around to his hip pocket.

"Hold on, there!" ordered Harry, as he covered him with a revolver in an instant; "if you draw a shooter, I will plug you so quickly you

won't know what has hurt you. You slink off to town just as quick as you can, and prepare yourself for the meeting you have demanded with me. I will give you all the satisfaction you want, you can rest assured of that. I will meet you."

The gambler glared at the young agent fiercely as he mopped the blood from his face at the same time, and presently, with a muttered oath, he turned and walked away toward the hotel.

"It served him right," observed the young lady. "But," she added, "what do you mean my the meeting he has demanded? You are not going to fight a duel with him, are you?"

"That is the programme, I believe," Harry answered.

"Oh, you must not do that; indeed, you must not."

"What, not meet him, after what he has just done to me?" demanded Harry with a grim smile; "I will meet him, and it will be a serious meeting for him, if I can make it so."

"But, you may get killed, and what satisfaction will there be in that?"

"Very little, I suppose; but it would not be very satisfying to let such an insult pass unnoticed. No, there shall be a meeting. And now if you will permit it, we will accompany you once more to the hotel."

The gambler sport had by this time gone on some distance ahead, and they now followed in the same direction.

They talked as they walked along, and ere they knew it had reached their destination.

Pausing only long enough to say a few words, they parted company with their fair companion and returned to the station.

Little was said on the way back, but when they arrived there Tripman asked:

"Well, are you willing to meet him now?"

"You heard what I said to Miss Maunders," was Harry's quiet response.

"Good for you! But, do you know what I think?"

"Hardly. I am not a mind-reader, old fellow."

"Do you want to know?"

"Of course."

"Well, I think that fellow is counting on a sure thing with you. He is no doubt a good shot, and thinks if he can only get you up in front of him to have a shot at you he will cook your goose completely."

"What gives you that idea?"

"Well, I will tell you that. He knew when he spat in your face what the result would be, or ought to have known, at any rate, after the taste he had of your fists last night; but he was willing to stand the knock-down for the satisfaction he would get out of you afterward. He would force you to meet him, whether you were inclined to do so or not."

"I guess you are right."

"But there is a way to foil him. If you know anything about short-sword fighting, you can demand satisfaction with swords, and I have the weapons at the hotel. That will knock his marksmanship in the head, and perhaps give you big advantages."

"Never had a sword in my hands in my life," was Harry's response to that. "I can shoot a little, however, and I will meet him with my revolver."

"But, shooting a little will not help you, if he happens to be a fine shot."

"Just take a match and step out there to that telegraph pole and stick it up, will you?"

"Certainly."

And Tripman complied with the request. He soon found a little hole in which to stick the end of the match, and having fixed it securely, came back to where Harry was standing.

"I can hardly see it," he then owned. "Can you see it at all?"

"Oh, yes, I can see it," was the reply; "and now if you will keep your eye on it for a moment I will show you where it is."

The pole was thirty or thirty-five feet away, but the match could be seen, and that was about all, too.

Fighting Harry drew a revolver, took steady aim for only a brief moment, and then fired; and at the same instant he fired the match sprung alight.

The bullet had done the work.

"Wonderful!" cried Tripman. "I'll bet you ten dollars that you can't do it again."

"Done," accepted Harry; "put up your match. Not that I want your money, but a little practice now won't hurt me any."

Tripman put up another match, and that was lighted as easily as the first. And so was a second, and a third, and a fourth. When it

came to the fifth, however, the marksman failed in the trick, breaking the match off short instead of lighting it.

"Do you think I shall be able to hold my own with him?" Harry asked, with his grim smile.

"I should say so," answered Tripman, proudly. "Just send me back to make the arrangements with his second, and I shall be happy."

"Very well. You now understand one reason why I did not want to meet him. I have no mercy for him now, however, after the way he spat on me. Go and tell the cur that I will meet him to-morrow morning at sunrise, on the street near the hotel, and that we will fight with our revolvers at forty paces."

"I will attend to it with all dispatch."

And away Tripman went to make the arrangements.

"Well," Harry muttered when he was once more alone, "I was told that this was a hard town, but I never thought I should find it so lively as it really is. They don't give a fellow time enough to do his private thinking."

The remainder of the day passed by without much excitement. The gambler-sport kept out of sight, and many of the others who had met the iron fists of Fighting Harry were glad enough to keep their aching heads upon their pillows.

And, as may be safely imagined, there was no trouble over at the station when the evening train was due.

When his work of the day was done, Harry turned his attention to the promise he had made to Miss Maunders.

He had promised to do what he could toward finding some trace of her lost sister.

He and Tripman were sitting in the public room of the Gilded Moonlight, at the hour when the crowd there was greatest, and Harry considered that there would be as good a place as any for him to start his search.

St. Clair Pembroke was present, but he had his back toward Harry and was reading, or pretending to read, a paper. His head was bandaged, and his high hat reposed on a table near by.

"Gentlemen," inquired Harry, in a voice loud enough to be heard by all, when there came a little lull in the conversation, "has any of you ever heard of a man named Waldo Fenway, in this part of the country?"

At mention of the name the gambler sport dropped his paper and faced instantly around.

"Have you ever heard of the party?" Harry demanded, as he noticed the move.

The man looked at him with a cold stare for a moment, and then answered:

"I have nothing to say to you, sir. We will do our talking in another manner at sunrise to-morrow morning."

"I have not forgotten that," retorted Harry.

"Gentlemen," the gambler announced, as he rose up, "if you are around at sunrise to-morrow you will see something that may be worth seeing. I have challenged this young upstart to mortal combat."

"Yes, gentlemen, be around by all means," supplemented Harry. "It will be worth your while, that I promise you."

Here was excitement instantly, and in the midst of it the gambler went out.

Going immediately up to his room, the fellow began at once to pace to and fro across the floor. He was greatly excited, and his mind seemed far from easy.

"What in Hades does he want with Waldo Fenway?" he presently muttered. "What does he know of him? And what of that girl? Where have I seen her face before?"

These queries only served to increase his excitement.

"Blazes!" he presently cried, "I have it now! Why could I not bring this to mind before? That girl's name is *Maunders*. How strange it is that I could not bring that into my mind. Here I have been having my eye upon the fortune of old Felix Maunders, ever since I learned that he had left it all to— But, never mind going over the whole thing; what I am after is to know how it was that her name did not strike me when I first saw it. I can explain it in only one way, and that is owing to that other one's name being *Wakefield*. Yes, that is just where it turned me; and then, too, I was not looking for anything of the kind to turn up."

To and fro he paced again, his hands clinched and his teeth set hard.

"That is the secret of it," he muttered. "That girl must be the sister I have heard of, and she has come out here to find the other one. And she has got this young man interested in the matter, and he is helping her. Ha, ha, ha!"

it is a pretty game, but it won't work. They will never find the missing one in this world. I am the only person alive who holds the secret, and they are not likely to get it out of me I think."

He had certainly hit the secret pretty straight. "And now," he presently went on in his muttering tone, "all the more reason why I must lay him low to-morrow. He knows too much to suit me, and if he only gets me on the hip in this matter I am gone up. Yes, he must die, and die he shall. Little he knows what a shot I am with the revolver, as he has played into my hands. Yes, to-morrow he dies, and then perhaps there will be some way of disposing of the girl. If so, then the road to the fortune will be cleared of every danger."

And so he ran on. Events were rapidly drawing to a focus, and it was pretty certain that there must soon be an explosion of some sort.

In the mean time Fighting Harry had been pushing his inquiries among those who were assembled in the room below, but he was not able to learn anything.

One man in the crowd directed him to Dennis O'Mara, saying that he had been in the town about as long as any one that he could think of, and perhaps he could learn something from him, as his saloon had long been the principal one of the town.

A little time later saw Harry on his way to that place.

CHAPTER XV.

WHAT WAH TOM HEARS.

TRIPMAN was with Harry, and as they walked along down the street, toward the place of their destination, Tripman observed:

"I suppose you are aware of the danger you are running in coming down here, my friend."

"Why any more danger here than elsewhere?" Harry asked.

"Because it is one of the hanging-out places of Cinnamon Jim and his gang," was the explanation given.

"Oh, I guess Cinnamon and his gang have had enough of me," Harry laughed. "If they want any more, however, let them come on."

"What I meant to warn you against though, was treachery."

"I shall try to look out for them."

Presently they came to the saloon and went boldly in.

Cinnamon Jim and most of his gang were there, and Cinnamon had just been making his brags what he would do with Harry the very first time he met him.

Harry looked around coolly as he entered, and Cinnamon's courage began to fade away like the morning dew, and neither he nor any of his lackeys had anything to say.

Fighting Harry went up to the bar, and Dennis having nothing to do just then, he had a good chance to speak with him.

"I have dropped in," said Harry, "to see if you could give me a little information."

"Prehaps of can," returned Dennis; "phwat is it ye're afther wantin'?"

"I am trying to find some trace of a person named Waldo Fenway, who is known to have been somewhere in this part of the country about five or six years ago, and I have been directed to you as about the right man to inquire of, as you have been here some time."

The Irishman's face was a study. It seemed to him that everything relating to the Fenways and little Blue Eyes had combined to haunt him on this particular day.

"And who sint ye here?" he demanded, his cold-looking eyes searching Harry's face keenly.

"I do not know his name," Harry answered; "it was some old man up at the Gilded Moonlight."

"And phwat d'ye want ter know about Waldo Fenway? Phwat is yer object in lookin' him up?"

"Your questions and manner prove to me that you do know something about the man," averred Harry, "and I will explain all that is necessary. I—"

"Hould on," Dennis interrupted, "we'll stip inter dhe back room."

Calling his man to take charge of the bar, the Irishman led the way into the little back room and closed the door after them.

"Now," he invited, "just sit ye down an' we'll have a talk. OI have heard somethin' about wan Woldo Fenway in me toime. Go right ahead, now, an' state yer case."

When Fighting Harry and Tripman had en-

tered the saloon they had been closely watched by a certain person, and that person was Wah Tom the Chinese. And when they had entered he drew nearer to learn more about their business there, evidently.

Standing at a window and looking through a scratched place in the painted glass, he gave a nod and mutter of satisfaction when he saw Harry step to the bar and speak to O'Mara.

Then when O'Mara and Harry went into the little room and shut the door, the spying "washee" gave a more emphatic nod, and turning away from the window he hastened into the hall of the house.

About the time, then, when Fighting Harry and Dennis sat down to talk, the worthy Wah Tom had his ear glued to the keyhole to catch their words.

"Well," Harry commenced, following the proprietor's invitation. "I am not so much concerned about Fenway himself as I am about his wife and child. I want to find some trace of them if they are alive, or certain knowledge about them if they are dead. Now, can you help me?"

"And why for d'ye want this information? Whose side are ye on? Are ye workin' fer dhe interest av dhe mother an' child, pervided ye kin foind 'em?"

"I am working for the interest of the mother and child," Harry declared.

"And if ye foind thim, phat thin?"

"I see I may as well tell you the whole story, as far as I know it, since you do not seem inclined to tell me anything until I do. A sister of the Mrs. Fenway has come to this town in search of her, and has asked me to help her in the search. I have promised to do so. That is all the interest I have in it. This sister says the grandfather of Mrs. Fenway—hers too, of course—has recently died, and has left his fortune to her—Mrs. Fenway—and her child. You can see from this that it will be a big thing for the lost ones if they are alive."

Wah Tom had his ear at the keyhole, and now dropped down upon his knees and listened with more eager attention than ever, if possible.

"And phwat fer a person is this sister ye speak of?"

"She is a young and pretty lady. Her name is Hope Maunders, and she is stopping at the hotel. Now, having told you all I can, I am ready to hear you."

"And hear me ye shall," Dennis declared, "but not now. 'OI will speak wid me wife about dhe matter, an' if you will bring dhe young lady here ter-morry, we will give ye every bit av information dhat we kin."

"Why not tell me now?"

"Because ol want ter speak wid me wife first, as ol said. Come ter-morry, an' bring dhe young—"

Just there he was interrupted by a great scuffle and uproar out in the other room, and cutting the conversation short, he threw open the door and sprung out to learn what was going on, Harry following right behind him.

The sight that met their eyes was an exciting one. Cinnamon Jim, Bullet-head Mike, Sledgehammer Gabe and several more of their kind, had Fred Tripman cornered, and were giving him more than he could do to defend himself.

Harry took it all in at glance. Cinnamon and his gang were once more intent upon his—Harry's—destruction, and had set upon Tripman as a convenient means of opening a fight, thinking that here and now they would surely have things their own way. And their reason for thinking so was good, for they were at least twenty in number.

Fighting Harry waited for no invitation, but sprung right into the fray, knocking men right and left, and in a moment was at Tripman's side.

Then commenced a *melee* that surpassed, if possible, the one that had taken place at the Gilded Moonlight. And on Fighting Harry's part it was one that meant business. He was getting tired of this sort of thing. Snatching up a chair, he rushed upon the rabble, and in less than two minutes they were strewn around the room in fantastic profusion and the fight was over.

Again Harry had escaped without a scratch. "Be dhe powers, bhoy, but you are a terror!" cried Dennis O'Mara, as he extended his hand to the hero. "Put yer hand roight there. Dhey have said dhat ol am somethin' av a foighter mesel', but you kin take dhe banner; an' you kin say dhat Dennis O'Mara owns ye as Chief o' Chained Cyclone, an' dhat he backs ye. Phwat will ye take?"

"Much obliged to you," responded Harry, "but I never drink. I can thank you all the

same for your good-will, however, and I hope we shall be good friends."

"You kin bet yer loife we shall," Dennis declared, "an' you shall be an honored visitor in me place whinever ye've a moind ter come an' see me."

After some little further conversation, Harry and Tripman went away, returning to the hotel, leaving the proprietor of the saloon to take care of the wounded and disabled ones, which he and his assistant did by dragging them out into the street and leaving them there to come to at their leisure.

"It is to be hoped the fools will get enough after awhile," observed Tripman, as he and Harry walked along.

"Yes, I hope they will," Harry returned. "If they go for me again, I think I shall be tempted to use my revolvers on a few of them. I am getting tired of them."

Harry explained what he had learned as they made their way up the street, he having taken Fred into the matter; and when he reached the hotel, sent up word to Miss Maunders that he would like to see her.

In a short time the young lady came down to the ladies' parlor, where Harry was awaiting her, and there they spent a pleasant half-hour in each other's company, Harry giving her what information he had been able to glean, and telling her of the appointment for the morrow.

"So," he concluded, "if I am disabled or killed in the morning, you will know where to apply for further information."

"Then you are still determined to fight, are you?" the lady asked, nervously.

"Oh, yes, that is settled, and it is the talk of the town. But I have no fears as to the result, and I think I can promise you my company on your visit to the O'Maras."

"I earnestly hope so."

And so they parted, with a polite touch of hands, and with a new emotion in their hearts which neither would have owned, perhaps.

In the mean time Wah Tom, the heathen Chinese, when he could hear no more at the door where he was listening, got up and went down to his own part of the house.

His eyes were again filled with tears, which he dashed away as spitefully as he had done on another occasion.

"Wah Tom fool, sure pop!" he exclaimed. "What he care for— But, he better keepee him head shut. Let tongue run 'way with sense. Him know thing or two, but this allee samee no time tellee it. Better him do writing now; got big job on hand."

With this, the Celestial turned up the light, which had been burning dimly, and got out his writing materials and began to write. And to judge by the length of time he was occupied, he was writing something other than wash-bills.

For more than an hour he was busy, and then he sealed up what he had written and hid it away somewhere in an inner pocket.

That done, he took up his light and entered his sleeping-room, and in a short time was curled up in bed.

But he could not sleep. His mind was too busy to admit of that. And as he lay there awake, some time later, he thought he heard voices just outside.

Getting up, he peered carefully out, and sure enough, there were two men right near his window, engaged in earnest conversation. And as he looked, they drew still nearer to the window, in order, apparently, to be more in the shadow. And then, with a start, the Chinaman recognized them. They were St. Clair Pembroke and Dennis O'Mara's assistant.

"Are we not in danger of being heard?" the gambler sport asked.

"No, no danger o' that," was the assurance; "there's nobody in this part o' th' house but that durn Chinese washee, an' he is asleep clear up to his ears afore this time."

"Well, do you agree to the proposition I have made? There will be a great excitement in the morning when the duel is on hand, and while I am killing that young upstart, you can steal the kid. If you will get away with her, and meet me with her at the place I named, I will pay you a thousand dollars spot cash. What do you say?"

"I will do it. I can do it easily enough, for they will never suspect me, and I can be miles away before she is missed."

"All right; do not fail me, and I may do even better by you than the sum we have agreed upon."

"You kin trust me."

There was some further talk, but of less importance, and then they parted, leaving Wah Tom in possession of their little plot.

CHAPTER XVI.

A WRONGED WOMAN'S DEED.

AT peep of day next morning the whole town was up and astir.

As has been said, the announcement of a duel had set the town at fever-heat, and before the sun was up every citizen who could get out of bed was on hand to see the fight.

Wah Tom was out early, too, and his first business was to go and warn Mrs. O'Mara of the danger that threatened Blue Eyes, telling her what he had overheard in the night. This put the Irishwoman on her guard, and she allowed that it would be a smart rascal who would get the child out of her house.

Just at sunrise the duelists' seconds appeared on the ground and measured it off, and a little later the principals themselves came out of the hotel. They were greeted with a rousing cheer, and it was noticed that the great majority of the people cheered for "Fighting Harry, the Chief of Chained Cyclone!"

Each walked to where his second stood, and when they had reached their respective places they turned and faced each other.

Both men had a revolver in each hand, and both handled them as though they were no strangers to that weapon.

Miss Maunders, in her room in the hotel, was looking down upon the scene, and chancing (?) to glance up toward her window, Harry caught her eye. Her face was deathly pale, but she favored him with a smile and a nod of recognition, to which he responded with a bow.

The two seconds now shouted for everybody to stand out of range, and all was made ready for the lottery-wheel of death to be set in motion.

We have seen the marksmanship of Fighting Harry, and know that the life of the gambler sport was in his hands. Would he spare it, and merely disable him? Knowing him as we now do, it is safe to say that such would be his intention. But, on the other hand, we have heard the gambler speak of his own prowess with the revolver, and we can well assure ourselves that he would shoot to kill. How was it to terminate?

That was the question that every man was asking of his neighbor, and in many instances bets were offered and taken as to the result.

When everything was in readiness, one of the citizens was called upon to step forward and count one, two, three; and at the word "three" the men were to fire.

This fell upon Hiram Goodblood, the mine boss, and stepping out a pace or two from the crowd he drew out his handkerchief, held it above his head for a moment, and then letting his arm fall, cried— "One!"

The handkerchief was raised again, but "two" was not said. There came an unexpected and startling interruption. A shot was heard, and the gambler sport was seen to throw up his hands, stagger for a moment, and then he fell forward upon his face as though dead.

The duel had come to a sudden and unlooked-for termination.

Cries of different sorts were raised instantly, and the crowd surged forward to learn how badly the man was hurt.

"Ther skunk fired afore th' word war given," shouted one of Cinnamon Jim's kindred spirits.

"You're a mighty liar!" retorted one of Fighting Harry's backers. "It wasn't him at all. Th' shot kem from over thar," pointing out the direction.

As the crowd pushed forward toward where the gambler lay, there was one who was ahead of all the others in the race, and that one was Wah Tom the Chinese. And he reached the side of the fallen man first.

Placing his hand upon his breast, he muttered something, and then raised up just as the others reached the spot where he lay.

Presenting his revolver, which he had in hand, at the crowd, the Chinese ordered them to stop, and said:

"Better all stop where be, else Wah Tom him shootee first man that stopee him, sure pop, evelytime. Hear what Wah Tom he got say. Me know who killed this man."

"You know who killed him?" cried the crowd. "Who was it?"

"It was Wah Tom. Me stand over there by tree, takee good aim, hit him right home first time. Me shootee to kill, too. Stand back, else somebody else gitee same dose. Wah Tom on shoot now."

"What did you kill him for, you blasted heathen?" demanded Ben Fender, the gambler's second.

"Him bad man, allee samee best shot with

pistol, and Wah Tom not want see him kill other man. That not all. Wah Tom been waiting for this day for long time, and now poor washee die happy. In here is letter to tell whole story," pointing to his breast with his revolver; "and now Wah Tom say his last good-by."

With these words, and before any one could realize what he intended to do, the Chinaman pulled the trigger of the weapon he held and sent a bullet into his own body.

Instantly there was a gasp of horror from the crowd, and the poor Chinese fell to the earth, his body falling across that of the man who had so recently perished by his hand.

To say that the excitement ran high does not express it at all. It knew no bounds, and those nearest to where the suicide and his victim lay were almost pushed upon them by the surging crowd.

Fighting Harry and his second did not get into the crowd, considering that it was no place for them at that end of the field under the circumstances which had called them out, and while they stood where they had first taken up their positions, the young lady came running out of the hotel.

"What does this mean?" she asked breathlessly.

"It means that a third party has taken a hand in the game, and that there will be no duel after all," Harry answered.

At that moment Hiram Goodblood came out of the crowd and said:

"It is all over, Mr. Dentwood, and you won't have to meet him. He has passed in his chips."

"And the Chinaman—did he kill himself?"

"He shot himself, but he is not dead. They are about picking them up now."

The place chosen for the duel was about midway between the Gilded Moonlight and the Anchored Tempest, a little nearer the latter place, perhaps, and the bodies of the Chinaman and the gambler were now taken up and carried into the saloon.

And there was a little excitement there, too. Dennis had caught his handy man in the act of trying to steal little Blue Eyes, having been warned by his wife, and he made a prisoner of him.

As soon as the two wounded ones were carried in they were laid on tables, and then those who pretended to know anything about such work tore open their clothes to learn how badly they were hurt.

The gambler was quickly pronounced dead, and then all attention was given to Wah Tom.

They were a little slower in getting at his wound, not knowing how to set to work about it, owing to being unaccustomed to his peculiar clothes, and before they had found the wound there came a cry from the group around him.

"Great blazes!" was the cry, "it is a woman, sure as th' hills; an' a white woman at that."

And such was indeed the case. Wah Tom was a woman, and a white woman. The discolored skin extended no further than just below the neck, and to the shoulders of her arms, and had clearly been put on from day to day to perfect the disguise. And the cue, that was her woman's hair, plaited after the manner of the Chinese, and the rest of the scalp had been shaved to make the deception perfect.

It was a wonderful revelation, and one that could hardly be believed, even by those who were right there to see it for themselves.

The woman was not dead, and the proprietor of the saloon ordered her taken at once upstairs where his wife could assist in attending to her. This was quickly done, and the body of the gambler-sport was carried to the hotel.

We have neither time nor space left to tell all that took place during that day. It would fill another volume were we to undertake it. This being the case, it must be told in few words.

The letter which the supposed Chinaman had written on the previous night was found in one of the pockets of his—or rather her—costume, and that told the whole sorrowful tale.

She was the lost Kate Wakefield, *nee* Maunders, but now Fenway. The man she had shot was her husband, Waldo Fenway. The letter, too long to be given here, was addressed to her sister, and in it everything was explained. She gave the date of her marriage, inclosing her certificate, and the date of the birth of her little baby, the little Blue Eyes who was in the keeping of the O'Maras. She said that her husband had begun to abuse her about a year after their marriage, and that after the birth of their child his abuse had become unbearable. She had implored him to send her home, but he would not do so, and one night had struck her and, as he

had supposed, killed her. He then dragged her body to the bank of a river and cast her in, and but for the timely aid of a Chinaman who had witnessed the crime, she would have drowned. The Chinaman took her to a house where she was given shelter until she could recover, and when she did recover no trace of her husband or child was to be found.

She was now thoroughly afraid of her husband, and dreaded another meeting with him, and, with the help of the wife of the friendly Chinaman, adopted the disguise in which we found her.

At last she found her child, and how she managed to be near it has already been told. But there was something strange about her, and she was not her former self. Her mind was slightly unbalanced, and she came to think that she was a Chinaman indeed. There was only one point upon which she was perfectly clear, and that was the thought of revenge. It had been her intention from the first to kill her husband if ever she met him. And she had now carried out that threat.

It was a sad blow for her sister, as may be imagined, and a startling one for the good Irish-woman who had cared for the child so long. Now, she said, she could understand many things that had been mysterious before.

Kate lived a day, and her sister was with her all the time, but her mind wandered and she said nothing rational. Her whole talk was of revenge and of her love for her child.

In the letter, she had given the child to her sister, asking her to take it and see that it was made happy; directing her to take part of their grandfather's wealth for herself, and to settle the other part upon the child, if it would be allowed. She did not want to be buried with her husband, but wanted to be taken to her native place and laid beside her parents; and this was carried out.

Our peculiar story is told. The Chinaman's mission has been shown. It was a sad ending to a once bright and happy life; but there have been many just as sad, and no doubt there will be just as many in the days to come. Fact can never be surpassed by fiction, in the actual lives of men and women.

A year passed, and then there was a scene of happiness; for, let us be thankful, the world is not all sadness.

The town of Chained Cyclone was now known by another name, and there resided Harry Dentwood and Hope, his happy wife; and with them lived little Blue Eyes, the dead sister's child. Harry was now in business in the town, and was making money, and was the leading citizen of the place. His prowess as a fighter was acknowledged far and near, and his word was law. Cinnamon Jim and his clan were no longer there, having long since taken their departure for a more salubrious clime. And the town that had once been noted for its "hardness" was now the most peaceful and quiet place in all that part of the country.

Fred Tripman, too, was married and settled there, and he and Harry were still the best of friends. The O'Maras were there, also, and their business was growing every day. Caleb Harts-horne and his Gilded Moonlight were still permanent features of the place.

There was a new agent at the railroad station, and the citizens never tired of telling him about the exciting times that had followed the advent of the railroad into their town, and particularly about the way in which Fighting Harry settled the trouble for once and all.

The fortune of old Felix Maunders went to Blue Eyes, of course, as Hope would not have taken any of it if she could have done so; but Blue Eyes declares that she will never touch it unless "Auntie Hope" will promise to take half of it. And so it remains. Her mother's life-story has never been told to the child in all its details, and perhaps it never will be.

There is a story, though, that is known to every man, woman and child in the place, and that is the story of Fighting Harry, the Chief of Chained Cyclone, and the way in which he won his right to that title.

THE END.

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